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WILLIAM CAREW HAZLITT.



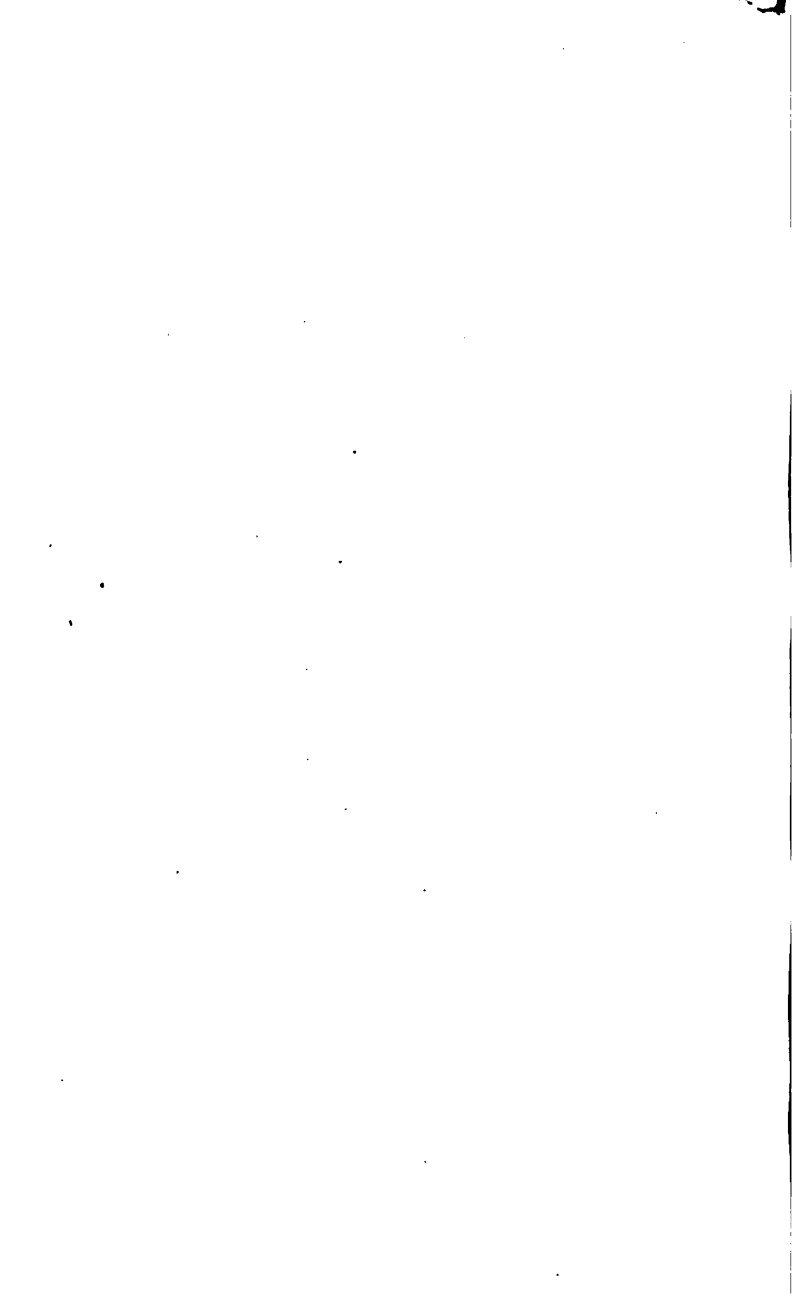
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THE FEUDAL PERIOD.



THE
FEUDAL PERIOD:

ILLUSTRATED BY

A Series of Tales
ROMANTIC AND HUMOROUS.

EDITED BY

W. CAREW HAZLITT,

*Editor of "Warton's English Poetry," "Popular Antiquities,"
"Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases," "New London Fest-
Book," "Anecdotes and Reminiscences of Illustrious
Men and Women of Modern Times," "The
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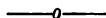
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PREFACE

TO THE NEW EDITION.



THE present little book is a revival of a publication which met with some favour on its original appearance, in 1786, in two small duodecimo volumes, now of the rarest occurrence. There was a second edition in one volume in 1789, under an altered title, as stated in the old Preface, which has been reprinted verbatim.

The second edition consisted of thirty-three tales, the third and fourth of forty; the number included in the present republication is fifty, all derived from Le Grand, except two, of which one is "The Friar that Told the Three Children's Fortunes," No. 48 of "A Hundred Merry Tales."

We have here the only work in which are to be

found in English prose those highly popular stories which are so well known in their original French garb, through the collections of Barbazan and Le Grand.

It is only necessary to observe that the former editions abound in faults of punctuation and orthography, not to mention the occasional omission of words and portion of words by the carelessness of the printer. The text has now been corrected throughout.

Of many of the more widely known tales, the poetical version by Ellis and Way, published at the end of the last century, possessed much classical elegance, while the notes are not without interest and value ; but the fidelity of the translation was almost unavoidably sacrificed to the exigencies of verse, and in a lame, though harmonious paraphrase we too often miss the truth of the original picture which, with all its faults on its head—its rough colouring, its homely design, and, to boot, its not over-nice detail, we get with greater force and veracity in a prose book.

The collection supplies a fair sample of the morality, social condition, and humour of the remote period to which the tales belong. A few of them exhibit a breadth which is scarcely consonant with modern ideas of decorum ; and it has been a task of some little difficulty to prune these occasional luxuriances without sacrificing a particle of what was really characteristic and valuable. Perhaps it may be said that the spirit pervading them is licentious, and such may be the truth, for they reflect vividly the manners of a licentious period ; that is to say, of a period when there was comparatively little social refinement, and it was usual to call a spade a spade. To those who are without the inclination to inquire more deeply, this series of mediæval stories and anecdotes may serve a useful purpose, as depicting roughly, but faithfully, the state of Western society a century before Chaucer, when the most humanising influence was the spirit of gallantry with all its faults, the homage offered by men to women. The view thus obtained may perhaps be regarded as more curious

than gratifying ; nor was the state of affairs in England in any degree better. The tales embrace nearly every class of life, and everywhere we find the same deplorable grossness, ignorance, and brutality. With more immediate reference to the singular tale of the "Two Bankers," it may be suggested that that is not indecent which the public opinion of the age recognises as customary ; and coming to the abstract question of morality, in its larger sense, it has to be proved, possibly, that England and France have advanced so far onward as might be expected and desired ; but we manage those matters differently now, and if we are not much better than we were, we try to seem so.

The antiquity of the stories here collected must be considered unequal. Many of them may be as old as Le Grand and others have supposed ; others, from their character and the nature of their construction, are probably not. There is not much internal evidence to enable us to arrive at more than an approximate estimate of this point ; but very

few of them were composed before the thirteenth, while the greater part seem to belong to the fourteenth, century. Such tales of knight-errantry, narratives of love adventures, and droll episodes, as we meet with in the following pages, succeeded to the legends, fables, and apologues preserved in the earliest MSS. which have come down to us, and kept a limited circle of readers amused, till better fare was provided for them by men of a higher stamp and of loftier literary pretensions.

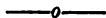
W. C. H.

KENSINGTON, *June*, 1873.



PREFACE

TO THE FOURTH EDITION.



THIS little volume is taken from a work published some years ago in France by M. Le Grand, entitled "Fabliaux, or Tales of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries." M. Le Grand's work is in five volumes ; and as his object was not merely to furnish his countrymen with an entertaining collection of tales, but also to illustrate the manners and customs of the times in which they were written, it abounds with notes, remarks, and dissertations, which for the most part would be very far from interesting to an English reader.

M. Le Grand has taken much pains to prove that these stories are really originals, and that

whatever resemblances or imitations may be extant of them in the collection of Italian or other novelists, they are the genuine inventions of the French troubadours or minstrels, who flourished chiefly from the close of the eleventh to the opening of the fourteenth century.

Another great object with M. Le Grand was to controvert the prevalent notion of the superiority of the southern provinces of France over those to the north of the Loire in this branch of literature. With this dispute the English reader has also no concern, though M. Le Grand thinks it of so much consequence as to make it the subject of a dissertation which occupies the greatest part of one of his volumes.

The originality of a story, however indisputable, would not compensate for insipidity, absurdity, or want of interest ; the translator, therefore, thought it best to pass by the greatest part of them, together with the notes, and thus to compress the work into a small volume, which has no pretensions to anything beyond entertainment.

In the first edition of this translation of M. Le

Grand's work the original title was preserved, namely that of "Tales of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries." In the second impression the translator had reasons, which he there gave, for changing the title into that of "Norman Tales." But on consideration, that although M. Le Grand has proved the minstrels of Normandy to have had a principal concern in the invention of these tales, they were not the sole authors of them, he has in this edition corrected the error which he made, and given the book a more appropriate title.

The translator has had the satisfaction to see that the English stage has derived some benefit from this publication. Several dramatic pieces have either in part or wholly been made up from these tales. Among others, the "Three Hunch-backed Minstrels" has afforded the subject of an successful farce ; and the musical one of "No Song, no Supper," with very slight alterations, has been taken from the "Poor Scholar."

CONTENTS.



	PAGE
LANVAL	I
THE PEDLAR	10
THE KNIGHT AND THE TRAP-DOOR	15
THE CHILD MELTED BY THE SUN	22
THE THREE HUNCHBACKED MINSTRELS	26
THE BARONESS OF VERGY	32
THE POOR SCHOLAR	48
THE THREE THIEVES	54
THE WIFE THAT TRIED HER HUSBAND	63
THE SEXTON OF CLUNY	71
THE NORMAN KNIGHT	77
THE HOUND AND THE SERPENT	80
THE HERMIT THAT BROKE HIS NECK	87
THE MINSTREL WHO WAS TURNED OUT OF HELL	90
THE COUNTRYMAN WHO GOT INTO HEAVEN BY HIS PLEADING	97

	PAGE
THE KNIGHT AND THE SWORD	102
THE SCARLET ROBE	113
THE BUTCHER OF ABBEVILLE	119
THE PARSON'S COW	123
THE WOMAN THAT ENSNARED A PRIEST, A PROVOST, AND A RANGER	125
THE QUEEN THAT KILLED HER SENESCHAL	133
THE KNIGHT THAT CONFESSED HIS WIFE	142
THE WIFE OF ORLEANS	149
THE PARSON'S LEGACY	154
THE CITIZEN OF ABBEVILLE	162
THE ILL-CUT MANTLE	168
THE GREY PALFREY	178
AUBEREA	193
AUCASSIN AND NICOLETTE	204
A WOMAN THAT MADE THRICE THE CIRCUIT OF THE CHURCH	225
THE THREE BEGGARS OF COMPIEGNE	231
THE CORDELIER'S BREECHES	239
THE PHYSICIAN OF BRAI	246
BERANGER	256
THE TWO FRIENDS	262
THE ANGEL AND THE HERMIT	268
THE TWO TRADERS AND THE CLOWN	278
THE CRUCIFIED PRIEST	281

CONTENTS.

xix

	PAGE
THE LADY AND THE PARSON	283
THE YOUNG LADY THAT WISHED TO FLY	285
THE TWO BANKERS	287
THE FRIAR WHO TOLD THE THREE CHILDREN'S FOR- TUNES	291
THE STORY OF THE OXFORD SCHOLAR WHO PROVED TWO CHICKENS TO BE THREE BY SOPHISTRY	293
THE MERCHANT TURNED MONK	294
THE FRENCH CURÉ WHO SAID "HEUGH!"	299
THE MAN WHO HAD THE DUMB WIFE	302
THE DENTIST	304
THE THIEF WHO TRIED TO RIDE ON A MOONBEAM	305
THE TALE OF THE MAN WITH WOODEN LEGS	309
THE PURGATORY OF ST PATRICK	311



TALES:

SERIOUS AND COMIC.

LANVAL—AN HEROIC TALE.

KING ARTHUR, according to annual custom, held during the Whitsuntide holidays a full court at Carduel. The liberality of the sovereign was no less conspicuous than the magnificence of the ceremony on this occasion. With a profuse hand he distributed presents among his faithful knights and adherents. One alone was denied any participation of the royal bounty: Lanval, a Breton knight, had long served his prince with zeal and fidelity; but nevertheless had the misfortune to find his services overlooked, and in a manner forgotten. Lanval was of royal descent; and England did not boast a knight of superior prowess or a more comely person. But neither asking nor receiving pension nor gratuity from the sovereign, his subsistence gradually diminished, and his resources became at length so entirely exhausted, that his necessities drove him to seek for an asylum at a distance from the court.

He departed, then, without communicating his design to any one, and took his course as chance directed him. The day was already more than half spent, when he found himself in a meadow, watered by a small river. Here he dismounted from his horse, and leaving him to range the pasture, reclined upon the verdant brink, watched the slow progress of the stream, and mused in silent grief on his misfortunes.

A sudden noise soon awaked the knight from his reverie, when, turning his head, he perceived two beautiful damsels elegantly attired ; after a gracious salute, they invited him, in the name of their mistress, into a tent which she had prepared not far distant. Lanval, in astonishment and rapture, started up and followed the ladies, without thinking of his charger. He soon came to a silken pavilion, decorated at the top with a golden eagle, within which he discovered on a magnificent couch the most accomplished female beauty that had ever presented itself to human eyes. A mantle bordered with ermine and dyed with Alexandrian purple covered the shoulders of the lady. The warmth of the weather had obliged her to throw it somewhat aside ; and the ravished eyes of the knight, through this opening, perceived a skin whiter than the ermine that touched it.

The knight continued for some time incapable of speech or motion. The lady called to him : "Lanval," said she, "it is you that I have been

in search of here ; you have pleased me ; I have conceived an affection for you, and will soon give you such an instance of it, as shall cause Arthur, by whom you have been neglected, and all the sovereigns of the earth to envy your lot."

This tender declaration, like a spark of fire, kindled the passions of the knight, and converted his astonishment into love and admiration. He answered the lady with an assurance of his extreme joy at having obtained her esteem, and of his readiness to exercise the utmost efforts of his valour in her service.

The damsels then entered with a rich and sumptuous habit for the knight. A delicious repast was served up, after which the fairy indulged her lover in the full accomplishment of his wishes. He would fain have continued in this delightful retirement ; but when night approached, the lady addressed him in this manner : " I cannot suffer you to remain any longer here ; arise, return to your court, and display there a magnificence worthy of me and yourself. Whatever expenses you may incur, gold shall not be wanting to defray them. Whenever you wish for my company (and I hope it will never be in an improper place) I permit you to call on me, and I shall instantly present myself before your eyes, invisible to all others ; but beware that none suspect your happiness. I require the most inviolable secrecy, and I give you notice that from the moment you transgress it you lose my

friendship, and will never see me more." On this she embraced him and took her leave. His horse awaited him at the entrance of the pavilion ; and he departed in such astonishment at his adventure, as to look back frequently with solicitude to convince himself that all had not been illusion.

On his return to Carduel, he loaded with presents all who had served him, redeemed prisoners, equipped and supplied the wants of poor knights, maintained minstrels, made presents to crusaders and pilgrims ; yet his purse suffered no diminution. But what was still more gratifying to him, whenever love incited, whether by night or day, he gave the signal to the fairy, who instantly appeared at his summons.

But this happiness was not to last for ever. At the festival of St John a great number of knights assembled at the castle. After supper they descended into the court-yard to walk. The queen, who had a secret passion for Lanval, and who had perceived him among the knights from the windows of her tower, proposed that the ladies should without ceremony descend likewise. The two companies joined ; they paired for dancing, toyed, and gave themselves up to mirth and pleasure.

Lanval alone was uneasy, not being able to banish the recollection of his mistress, and longed to make his escape to her. The queen, who had often wished to find him alone, seized the present opportunity, and calling him to her, addressed him

as follows : " Lanval, I have always entertained an esteem for you, and it is your own fault if I do not make you a surrender of my heart ; tell me, would it not be acceptable to you ? " The knight's affections were already pledged ; and even were they not, he had too much loyalty to think of an injury towards his sovereign. He hesitated—he demurred. At length, after some tender solicitations, the queen became enraged at his coldness, and cast out such bitter invectives against him that he was provoked to acknowledge he had a mistress—that his mistress was so pre-eminent in beauty as to be above all competition, and that even one of her female attendants far exceeded her majesty in charms.

This provoking answer worked up the queen's indignation to fury. She retired to her chamber, and declared she would not leave her couch till the king afforded her vengeance on Lanval. Arthur was then engaged in the chase. On his return at night the queen threw herself at his feet and implored satisfaction of an insolent vassal, who had not only had the effrontery to offer her his addresses, but had, on her refusal, dared to insult her, and to avow that he had a mistress whose attendants were to be preferred to her. Seduced by the tears of his consort, Arthur resolved on the destruction of Lanval, and sent three of his trusty barons to arrest him.

Lanval had left the castle full of apprehension.

Though he had not named his mistress to the queen he had yet spoken of his happiness, and dreaded the resentment of the fairy. Scarcely had he got home before he gave the accustomed signal, but on this occasion it was not answered. It was in vain that he poured forth lamentations and sighs, cursed his indiscretion, and sued for pardon : his vows were uttered to the wind ! The barons found him in this melancholy situation when they brought him the royal mandate to appear at court in his defence. With despair at heart, and little solicitude concerning a life that had now become odious, he followed them to the castle.

Immediately on his appearance the king began to reproach him in the most pointed terms. Lanval, full of surprise, made solemn protestations of his innocence respecting any attempt to seduce the honour of the queen, but acknowledged the petulant expression that had escaped him in his anger, and submitted himself to the judgment of the court. In consequence the proper number of judges were chosen among his peers.

The day fixed for the trial having arrived, the barons assembled, and Arthur himself presided at the board. Animated by the queen, who was present, he strove to infuse the same spirit into the judges. The accused knight was interrogated, and was commanded to retire that the bench might proceed to judgment. But these brave

warriors felt a repugnance to condemn to death a knight without blemish, a youth of so much comeliness and promise, far removed from his native country, and without support or connection in a strange court. Several were for imprisonment, and one of them, in hope of saving the culprit, having proposed that he should produce his mistress—in order that, after comparison, they might determine whether he was just in preferring her to the queen — his suggestion was unanimously adopted. Unfortunately it was no longer in his power to see her; and this last expedient only served to convince him that he was now deprived of every resource.

They were proceeding to judgment, on Lanval's declining the award, when suddenly two damsels mounted on grey palfreys appeared before them, of such extraordinary beauty, that the barons concluded one of them to be the much-boasted mistress of Lanval. They were presented to the king, and announced to him the arrival of their mistress. An instant afterwards two others appeared, of majestic stature, and still more beautiful than the former. They were very superbly dressed and mounted upon Spanish mules. The monarch went himself to conduct them, and returned quickly to expedite judgment lest the knight should escape his vengeance.

But loud shouts of joy and acclamations from without again stopped the proceedings of the

judges. They looked out, and saw approaching, upon a horse whiter than snow, a lady of supernatural beauty. Men and women, knights and commonalty, all in short who inhabited the environs of the castle, ran to attend her in her progress, and nothing could be heard around her but a confused murmur of admiration and applause.

The friends of Lanval, doubting not but that was the lady from whom alone he was to expect relief, came in haste to announce the fortunate arrival. Seated apart, a prey to anguish and sorrowful reflections, he waited the stroke of death with resignation, as he had lost all that could render life supportable. At the discourse of his friends, he raised up his eyes, and cried, "It is she! I die happy since I have once more beheld her!"

The sovereign, with all his court, arose to receive the lady. She entered the palace, saluted the assembly, and spoke in the following manner: "King, and you, O barons, listen to me! Arthur, I have loved one of your knights, on whom I have been obliged to confer the reward that should have proceeded from you. He was guilty of an act of disobedience, and I was inclined to punish him, by leaving him for a time on the brink of death, but I have now come to extricate him from it, in return for his fidelity. Barons, you required my presence to condemn or absolve him; here I am! now compare, and give judgment." They all ex-

claimed that Lanval was in the right, and with a unanimous voice acquitted him. The fairy then departed with her damsels. The knight, mounting on some marble steps that were placed at the gate of the castle, vaulted upon the fairy's horse as she passed, and went along with her.

The Bretons gave out that she conducted him to a charming island, named Avalon, where their love was crowned with happiness. It is certain at least that he has never since been heard of.

THE PEDLAR.

A COMIC STORY.

A RICH baron, of very extensive possessions, had throughout his territories established so strict a police that rogues and thieves durst not make their appearance in them, but had through his severity been driven to commit their depredations in other quarters.

On a certain day he gave public notice of a new fair. Considerable merchants accordingly brought their carriages loaded with goods from the adjacent towns, and among them a dealer in small wares appeared, whose parcel being rather too heavy for his own shoulders was borne by a pack-horse. When he came to unload and display his effects for sale, he found his horse an incumbrance. He could not afford his subsistence at the livery stables, and to let him graze at random in the meadows would be at the risk of losing him. A merchant who was standing by soon relieved the pedlar from his embarrassment. "Follow my example," said he, "go and put your beast under the protection of the baron, and then you may sleep in quiet. You will nowhere find such protection and security as here. Should any man be daring enough to steal the horse

he would inevitably be brought to the gallows, and you would have beside full compensation for the loss."

The pedlar derived comfort from this assurance. He went and took his horse to the field : but whether he misunderstood the merchant, for he was a man of great simplicity and ignorance, or thought two protectors better than one, he began to mutter a few ejaculations and prayers, to recommend the preservation of his animal to God as well as to the baron, imploring that it might be their joint care not to suffer him to leave the meadow.

As it happened, he had no reason to complain that his prayer was neglected, for the horse never left the pasture : but in the night a wild beast broke in, devoured the animal, and made so complete a meal of him that, when the pedlar returned to fetch him away, he could find nothing but the bones. This accident was likely to be his ruin ; for no longer able to pursue his business at the fairs he could exist no other way than by begging. In this despair he almost envied the lot of the robbers who had been hanged up by the baron. Recollecting at last what the merchant had said of this lord's humanity and justice, he went to lay the misfortune before him, and to endeavour to move his compassion.

He presented himself then in tears before the baron : "Sire," cried he, "may Heaven avert from you the misfortune that I have undergone."

The baron was affected at this complaint. "Friend," said he, "I wish it were in my power to alleviate your unhappiness. What is the cause of your grief?" "Ah! Sire, I had a horse that constituted my whole property. I was informed on my arrival here, that if I commended it to your care, I need be under no solicitude, for that you would secure me from any loss by it. I accordingly put it into your meadow, commending it to God's protection and to yours; and, alas! a savage animal has devoured it. I am now ruined without resource, unless you will have compassion on me." "Well, well, that is but a trifling mishap," said the baron, smiling; "so small a matter, my good friend, should not give you so much uneasiness. What was the price of your horse?" "By my hopes of heaven, Sire, and the faith you owe your mistress, I valued it at sixty pence." "Well," said the baron, "there are thirty. If you had placed it solely under my protection, I should have held myself bound to pay the whole sum; but as you have also called upon that of God, it is but just that he should come in for his half of the damages, and I advise you, without delay, to go and make your claim."

The pedlar thought the observation but too well founded, and was out of humour with himself for not having put his horse entirely under the protection of the baron. The thirty pence afforded him, however, some consolation. He then loaded his

pack, and pursued his journey, still dissatisfied, and regretting that he could not devise means to recover the remainder of his losses.

Intent on these reflections he met a monk, mounted on a handsome gelding. He walked directly up to him, stopped him, and asked to whom he belonged. "I am a servant of God," replied the gentleman of the cowl. "Ho ! ho ! brother, you are welcome ; since you are a servant of God I must inform you that he owes me thirty pence, and beg that you will discharge the debt for your master, and that immediately." In saying this, he seized on the monk's cloak and stripped him of it. The monk, who found that he was over-matched, cried out against the injustice of the procedure, and claiming the privilege of his profession, suggested that their dispute should be referred to the decision of the lord paramount. The pedlar agreed to this proposal ; and they made their way together to the castle.

"Sire," said the shorn votary of the cloister, "I am come to complain of an offence committed in your territories, and to demand justice on this villain, who has not only dared to lay violent hands on a priest, but, under I know not what pretence that God owes him thirty pence, insists on payment from me, and to enforce it has seized upon my mantle. I request that he may be ordered to return it, and that he may be punished for his audacity." "Sire," retorted the pedlar, "this man,

though he calls himself a priest, has neither honesty nor truth in him. He here calls upon you to punish me ; and but just now, on the highway, he agreed that we should repair to you as arbitrator between us."

This last expression irritated the monk, who insisted that none but God had a right to judge him. "Since that is the case," said the baron, in a jocular manner, "if you will have no other judge but God, go and lay your suit before him ; I cannot presume to meddle in it. Meanwhile, I would advise you to pay this man, who seems to be a robust, determined fellow, the money he demands of you ; not forgetting that it will hereafter be in your power to have recourse for a compensation to your master." The monk could make no further plea, but paid the thirty pence to the pedlar ; whether he afterwards made it good out of his master's effects, it is not so clearly known.

THE KNIGHT AND THE TRAP-DOOR.

IN former times, a gentleman of distinction, of the kingdom of Montbergier, a knight, and noted for his feats of valour, had in his sleep a very singular dream. He fancied that he saw a lady of extraordinary beauty, and conceived a sudden passion for her. He knew nothing either of her name or country, but her person and her features had struck him so forcibly, and were so strongly imprinted on his memory, that he had no doubt of recognising her in any part of the world.

By a fatality no less singular the lady dreamt that love had united her affections with those of a knight whose name she knew not, but whose figure was so strongly engraved in her bosom that neither change nor time could efface it.

It certainly does not appear to be the act of a very wise or prudent man to go upon an enterprise in consequence of a dream ; yet it was what our knight resolved to do. In order to meet the accomplishment of his adventure he prepared an equipage, loaded a war-horse with gold and silver, and began his journey. Several months elapsed, while he was beating about the country ineffectually

without any check to his hopes or any abatement to his ardour. At length he discovered near the sea coast a castle, surrounded with ramparts recently constructed, with a tower of prodigious strength, of which the walls were thirty feet thick and about a bow-shot in height. The lord of the mansion was a rich and powerful duke, jealous of a beautiful woman, whom he kept confined in this fortress, secured by eighteen doors with iron bars and locks of vast strength and intricacy. He committed the care of the gates to no deputy, but shut and opened them himself. He always carried the keys about him, and would not intrust them to any living being.

On his entrance into the town the knight cast his eyes accidentally upon the tower, and perceived at one of the windows a face that he recollected ; it was the lady of his dream, her whom he sought with so much anxiety, and whom he had loved before he saw her. She also had descried him at a considerable distance and knew his person. So eager was she on the discovery, that nothing but the fear of her jealous husband prevented her from calling to him aloud ; restraining, however, the impetuosity of her passion, she went no farther than to sing a love song, that might give the traveller an intimation of her emotions at seeing him.

The knight was impatient to reply, yet, that he might not ruin his project, he appeared as if he heard nothing. He instantly repaired to the castle,

presented himself to the lord, and begged that he might be employed in his service, giving himself out for a gentleman who had killed a knight in a tournament, and was by a prosecution from the relations of the deceased obliged to quit his native country. "You are welcome," said the duke ; " I am at this moment at war with enemies who are committing depredations on my frontiers : you may be useful to me, and I willingly accept the offer of your services."

The very next day, the knight had occasion to exercise his valour. His arm, strung by love, performed wonders. In less than three months the enemies of the duke were either killed, dispersed, or made prisoners, the country rescued and the roads free. The conqueror, in recompense, was made on his return the duke's chamberlain ; and then he thought seriously of putting into execution the project which his passion had suggested to carry him into the presence of the duchess.

Under some plausible pretext he persuaded the duke to make him the grant of a piece of ground in the court-yard, with permission to build a small lodge upon his own plan. This he obtained without difficulty. He caused then to be erected at a little distance from the tower, but not so near as to excite jealousy in the duke, a small house with a drain and back door. When all the walls were finished and the roof covered, he seduced the architect by a bribe, and prevailed upon him to make a subterraneous passage to communicate with the tower.

When he had penetrated to the floor he contrived a trap-door, which was constructed with so much art and shut so closely that the keenest eye could not discern it.

He found no difficulty after that to make his way into the tower to see his lady and to attain the summit of his wishes. On his leaving the tower she gave him as a pledge for her fidelity a very valuable ring which the duke had presented her. The knight, who had projected another plot, no sooner was in the presence of the husband, than he endeavoured by every means to display the new acquisition upon his finger. The jealous duke changed colour at the sight. He, nevertheless, had prudence enough not to drop a hint of his suspicions to the chamberlain, but went immediately to the tower, in order to interrogate the duchess.

The lover suspected this ; flew immediately to his subterraneous passage, and while the other was opening and shutting with great precision the eighteen gates, he had time to enter into the tower through his trap-door and to replace the ring.

The husband's first demand was to see his ring. At this requisition the duchess at first affected great surprise. But when the duke insisted on seeing it, and accompanied his command with oaths and menaces, the lady, without saying another word or appearing anxious to know the motive for his curiosity, opened the box, in which she had just before laid up the ring, and presented it to him. That was

enough to restore him to his confidence, and to banish his suspicion upon that head. He concluded that the chamberlain had got a ring that much resembled hers, and went to rest in perfect tranquillity of mind.

On the following day he took it into his head to hunt in the forest, and desired the chamberlain to be in readiness to attend him. "Sire," answered the knight, "have the goodness to dispense with my attendance to-day. My mistress has this instant arrived. During my absence she has found means to compound with my prosecutors ; and this intelligence, which she has brought me in person, obliges me to quit your service and to leave the castle to-morrow. But, sire, she is desirous to make her acknowledgments for your bounty to me, and begs that you will sup with her to night on your return from the chase." The duke assented. Now this was a trick which the two lovers had concerted, and the pretended mistress, with whom the duke was to sup, was no other than the duchess herself.

In the evening she passed through the trap-door into the chamberlain's lodge. There she found a rich dress, which he had provided to disguise her a little.

The duke, on entering with his attendants, saw a lady of extreme beauty, and dressed with uncommon splendour. The knight, taking her by the hand and presenting her, said, "Sire, receive my mistress, the

sole object of my love, and one whom I hope soon to call my wife." Scarcely had the duke cast his eyes upon her face, but he thought he recognised his lady's features, and was thrown into the utmost consternation. The lady, without appearing to perceive it, took her seat at the table. She then desired the duke to sit down by her, and pressed him to eat, but he could not swallow a morsel. A thousand confused ideas floated in his brain. During the whole time of supper he had his eyes fixed on her like one enchanted, and wondered how it could be possible for his consort to escape out of a tower so strong, so high, and so well secured.

On rising from the table he retired again to satisfy his suspicions. The duchess, at the same time, threw off hastily her rich dress, and, passing through the trap-door, got to her apartment in the tower, where she placed herself in bed, and pretended to be in a profound sleep. The duke was very agreeably surprised, after having opened and examined all his doors, to find the duchess in bed. He thought of this affair just as he did of the former considering that it was as likely for two women as for two rings to bear a close resemblance to each other. This reflection restored his peace of mind. He also then lay down, and passed the night with the duchess, little imagining that this was to be the last!

The knight had before-hand made all necessary preparation for his departure. A vessel, privately equipped attended in the harbour. The

wind was favourable, and everything seconded his designs.

Early the next morning our lover came to take his leave of the duke, just as he was going to matins, and respectfully asked of him a parting favour—that of being a witness to his marriage. “My bride,” said he, “requires your approbation of our union, and I myself wish to receive my happiness from your hands.” The duke having signified his readiness to comply with this request, the knight hastened to conduct the duchess, who waited for him at the lodge. She came covered with a hood, and in as close a disguise as possible. Two knights attended her to the church, when the duke, fully cured of his suspicions, presented her in marriage to the chamberlain. From the church the newly-married couple repaired to the vessel in which they were to take their departure. The duke with all his attendants insisted on accompanying them himself. He gave his hand to help the bride upon deck and, rallying her on the joy that was perceptible in her countenance, bade her adieu with good-humoured gallantry. But this pleasantry did not last long, for, returning to the tower, he soon discovered who the lady was that he had given away in marriage, and who showed such alacrity at her departure. She was gone, and all that remained for him was the shame and vexation of having been duped so egregiously.

THE CHILD MELTED BY THE SUN.

AN active and industrious merchant had occasion often to be abroad, for a considerable time together, in the pursuit of his traffic. During one of his voyages, which lasted for more than two years, it happened that his wife became enamoured of a young neighbour. Love, which is restrained with difficulty, soon brought them together, but they managed their affairs in so bungling a manner that, at the expiration of about nine months, the merchant's wife found herself for the first time a mother.

The husband, on his return, was greatly surprised to find this acquisition to his family, and asked his wife to what accident they were indebted for it. "Sir," said she, "I happened one day to be reclining above stairs at the window, and giving vent to my grief for your absence. It was in the winter season, and there was at the time a heavy fall of snow. As I cast up my streaming eyes to heaven, and heaved a sigh on thinking of you, a flake of snow accidentally made its way into my mouth, and I immediately found that I had conceived this child

whom you now see." The merchant, on hearing this story, did not betray the least symptoms of discontent or ill humour. "Thanks be to God," said he; "I wished for an heir, and he has sent me one: I am satisfied, and thankful for his bounty." He, indeed, thenceforward affected the most entire satisfaction, never offered the least reproach to his wife, but lived in the same good understanding with her as before. Nevertheless this was all dissimulation—he had formed inwardly a resolution to be one day or another amply revenged.

The child, however, grew up, and had attained the age of fifteen when the merchant, who was occupied with his project of revenge, at last thought seriously of putting it into execution. "Wife," said he one day, "you must not be afflicted if I once more take my leave of you for a time. I am going upon a long journey to-morrow; and I desire you will get ready my baggage and that of my son; for I mean to take him with me, that he may acquire some knowledge of trade while he is young." "Alas!" replied the mother, "I am much grieved to hear that you are going to take him abroad so soon; but, since it is for your satisfaction and his advantage, I submit. God be with both, and bring you back in safety." Matters being thus arranged, the merchant set off early the next morning, and took the child of snow along with him.

It is needless to give the particulars of the journey, or an account of the countries through which he passed. It is enough to mention that, on his arrival at Genoa, he found a Saracen merchant bound for Alexandria, to whom he sold the boy as a slave. Afterwards, having settled his own affairs at his leisure, he returned home.

The imagination of a hundred poets combined would not give you an adequate description of the distraction of the mother, when she saw the merchant return without her son. She tore her hair and fell into a fit of phrensy. At length, having recovered herself, she conjured her husband to tell her without reserve what had happened to the youth. The husband expected all this uproar, and therefore was not puzzled for an answer. "Wife," said he, "one cannot arrive to my age without having had experience enough in the world to know the necessity of reconciling one's self to whatever may happen. For what do we gain by giving way to our afflictions? Listen with fortitude to the misfortune that happened to us in the country whence I come. Your son and myself were, on a very sultry day, climbing up a steep and lofty mountain. It was about noon; the sun was vertical over our heads, and burned like fire. When behold, on a sudden your son began to dissolve, and melted before my eyes! I would have offered him assistance, but knew that it would be vain;

for I recollected that you told me he was the produce of a flake of snow."

The wife knew perfectly well the merchant's meaning. She durst not however break out, but was obliged to swallow the liquor that she had brewed.

THE THREE HUNCH-BACKED MINSTRELS.

AT Douay lived a burgess, esteemed for his prudence and his probity throughout the town. Unfortunately for him, he was not in very affluent circumstances, but he had a daughter, whose beauty and accomplishments made him forget the scantiness of his fortune.

On the banks of a river, at a small distance from the town, there stood a castle, at the foot of which was a bridge across the river. The owner of this castle was a hump-backed object of deformity. Nature had exhausted her ingenuity in the formation of his whimsical figure. She had provided this baboon, in lieu of sense, with a monstrous large head, which was in a manner lost between two high shoulders, and covered with a prodigious quantity of thick hair. His neck was short, and his face so shockingly deformed as almost to terrify the beholder.

Such was the picture of the Castellan who, notwithstanding all his ugliness, took it into his head to be enamoured of the burgess's beautiful daughter. He went still farther. He even ventured

to demand her in marriage, and, as he was the richest man in the district (for he had employed his whole life in amassing wealth) the poor girl was delivered up to him. But this acquisition did not add to his happiness. Full of jealousy, from a consciousness of his personal defects, he had no rest or tranquillity of mind either by day or night. He was perpetually going backward and forward, prying and watching in every corner, and never suffering any one to come within the doors, except such as brought something that was wanted in the house.

One of the Christmas holidays, as he was thus standing sentry at his gate, he was accosted by three hunch-backed minstrels. These men had made up a party together on purpose to amuse themselves at the expense of their rich brother in deformity. They saluted him in that quality, and demanded brotherly entertainment, at the same time, to demonstrate the affinity, each displaying his hump. This pleasantry, which one would suppose could not have been very acceptable to the lord of the castle, was nevertheless extremely well received. He conducted the minstrels to his kitchen, served them with fowl, peas, and bacon, and even gave them each at parting a piece of money. But when they were at the gate he called out to them: "Observe this house attentively, and take care that you never think of setting foot in it again, for if ever I catch you here you shall

take your last draught at the bottom of that river."

Our musicians laughed at this threat of the Castellan, and took the road towards the town, singing, dancing, and skipping in a ridiculous manner to show their contempt of him. He, on his part, without bestowing the least attention on them, went out and took his walk towards the country.

His lady, who saw him cross the bridge, and who had heard the minstrels, called them to her, intending to amuse herself for a few minutes by hearing them play and sing. They returned into the house, when the doors were shut, and the musicians began to play some of their gayest and most approved airs for the entertainment of the lady.

She had just entered into the spirit of this diversion when, on a sudden, the husband's knock was heard at the door. The fiddlers gave themselves up for lost, and the wife was seized with the utmost consternation; indeed all four had equal cause for their terrors. The lady in this dilemma happily discovered three empty trunks upon a bedstead; she put a fiddler in each, shut the covers, and went to open the door for her husband.

He had come only to pry into his wife's concerns according to custom, so, after a short stay, he went out again, not, as one may conjecture, to the great dissatisfaction of the lady. She instantly

ran to the trunks, in order to free her prisoners ; for the night approached, and her husband could not be long absent. But, conceive her alarm when she found them all three suffocated ! She almost wished herself in the same situation. However, she prudently considered that all the lamentation in the world would be too late to remedy the evil. The object now was to get rid of the dead bodies, and there was not a moment to be lost in attempting it.

She ran to the door, and seeing a countryman pass ; “ Friend,” she cried, “ have you any inclination to be rich ? ” — “ To be sure I have, lady. Try me, and see whether I have any objection. ” — “ Well, all I ask in return, is a service that you can render me in a moment, and I promise you thirty well-told livres ; but you must take a solemn oath to be secret. ” The countryman, tempted by the offer of so large a sum, entered into all the obligations she required. The lady of the castle then led the countryman into her apartment, and opening one of the trunks, told him all she required of him to do was to take the dead body he saw there and to throw it into the river. He asked her for a sack, put the carcase into it, and going down pitched it from the bridge ; then returned, out of breath, for his payment.

“ I wish nothing more than to satisfy you,” said the lady ; “ but you will allow that the bargain we made should be fulfilled on both sides. You

agreed with me to rid me of the dead body ; but here it is again ; look at it yourself." At the same time she showed him the second trunk, which held another of the hunch-backs. The clown was confounded at the sight. "What the devil ! is he come back again ? I thought I had pitched him over completely. It is assuredly a sorcerer ! but, by all that's good, I'll go through with it ; he shall have another leap into the water." He instantly stuffed the second carcase into the sack, and went to throw it, as he did the other, into the river ; taking care to put his head undermost, and to see that he fell to the bottom.

In the meantime the lady changed the position of the trunks, so that the third, which was full, stood in the situation of the first. When the countryman entered, she took him by the hand, and conducting him towards the remaining carcase, said, "You were certainly right, my friend, this must have been a sorcerer, and there never was his equal. For, do but observe, there he is again !" The clown ground his teeth with rage. "What then, by all the devils in hell, am I to be all day carrying this cursed hunch-back ? The villain is determined not to die ! But we shall see how that will be." He raised the body then with the most dreadful imprecations, and after tying a large stone about his neck threw him into the middle of the stream, threatening violently, if he should escape a third time, to cudgel him to death.

The first object that presented itself to him, on his return, was the master of the house, who was coming home. At the sight the clown was almost beside himself. "What ! are you there again, and is it impossible to get rid of you ? Come, I see that I must make away with you at once." He immediately rushes upon the Castellan and knocks out his brains ; and in order the more effectually to prevent his return, he throws him into the river, tied up in a sack.

"I venture a wager you have not seen him again this last time," said the clodpole to the lady, when he returned to her chamber.—She answered, that she had not.—"Yet you were not far from it," replied he ; "for the sorcerer got as far as the door. But I took care of him. You may make yourself easy, madam ; I 'll answer for it, you 'll not be troubled with him again."

It was no difficult matter for the lady to understand this declaration. In fact, she knew but too well what he meant by it : but the misfortune was, there was no remedy, and it was necessary for her to take comfort. As to what remained to be done, the countryman was paid with exact punctuality the sum he had been promised by the lady ; and perhaps neither one nor the other ever knew a happier day.

THE BARONESS OF VERGY.

A GALLANT and comely knight, named Agolan, became violently enamoured of the Baroness of Vergy, niece to the Duke of Burgundy, and paid his court to her with so much ardour that she could not prevent herself at length from conceiving a reciprocal passion. She yielded to his love, but upon this condition, that he should not suffer the most minute suspicion of their connection to transpire, on pain of incurring her hatred and resentment as much as he had before experienced her tenderness.

After this mutual compact the charming and circumspect baroness took the most scrupulous precautions in the interviews she had with her lover. She occupied in the castle an apartment that looked into the garden. Agolan, whenever he was permitted to approach her, went alone at night to the garden ; and there behind some tree he waited in silence the concerted signal. This signal was a little dog loosened by the lady as soon as she found herself at liberty. The animal, by his barking and his playful caresses, gave notice to

the knight when he was to slip quietly into his mistress's chamber, sure to find her alone. The next morning, before daylight, he retired. Thus lived this charming couple, their minds entirely engaged in the pleasure they received in each other's company, and their happiness the more exquisite in its being known only to themselves.

Agolan, whose valour often drew him to the court of the duke, his sovereign, had become his confidential friend ; but he had at the same time, without being aware of it, recommended himself still more strongly to the duchess. She had not contemplated with indifference the gracefulness of his person and the manly beauty of his countenance, and more than once gave him an opportunity, if his affections had not been riveted in another place, to discern it. But, this language of the eyes not having been understood, she found it necessary to adopt another.

She accordingly, on a certain occasion, took the knight aside, and expressed her surprise that, with so great reputation and so many exterior advantages, he had not yet, among all the beauties of the Burgundian court, made his choice of a mistress. He answered, that the dread of having the homage of his heart rejected had till then prevented him from making the offer of it. She blamed his excessive modesty, urged him to have a little more confidence in himself, and assured him that accomplishments like his might find many a heart

that required only the summons to surrender. But she would have him soon fix his choice, and make it among persons of the first rank ; especially if any of that description deigned to give him an intimation of their good will. Our knight declined meeting these advances of the duchess, and cut the matter short by declaring that he was too conscious of the weakness of his pretensions to be ridiculously ambitious of obtaining the happiness of monarchs.

Deceived by the circumspect caution of his discourse, the duchess thought that Agolan to that moment had received no amorous impression ; and believed it was only necessary to dissipate the prejudices he had imbibed respecting the difference of rank. She then asked him what answer his modesty would make if she were to choose him for her knight, and to avow that she had long had a strong prepossession in his favour. He replied with a mixture of respect and ingenuity : “ Madam, I knew not that I had so great an honour ; and I am thankful to God for his grace in enabling me to obtain your favour and that of my sovereign. I hope he will also grant me that of continuing to deserve them, and of never forgetting the faith and loyalty I owe you both.” “ And who urges you to betray your sovereign ? ” she sharply rejoined, and then, with a furious look which she accompanied with some sarcasms, she left him and went towards her apartment, there to conceal her shame and to think upon the means of vengeance.

At night when the duke had lain down by her side, she began to heave sighs half suppressed, as if she laboured under some inward affliction. The duke, who had a tender affection for his wife, was very uneasy at it, and inquired the cause of her sorrow. "It is on your account, my good and kind lord, that I grieve. How seldom, alas! can persons of your rank reckon with certainty upon the honour and fidelity of their adherents. Nay, they experience most frequently the greatest perfidy from those on whom they have heaped the greatest favours."—"I cannot comprehend the tendency of your words," said the duke, in surprise; "I think that I am surrounded by none whose fidelity I cannot rely on. But if among them I should discover a traitor, an exemplary punishment should be the return for his guilt."—"Then, my lord, let that punishment fall on Agolan. You remember all that you have done for that perfidious man; learn that his gratitude consists in his endeavours to dishonour you; and that yesterday I was put to the blush, almost the whole day, by his criminal solicitations. The ladies of your court had good reason, as well as myself, to wonder that the hypocrite had never been detected in an amour. We now are acquainted with the cause, and our surprise can subsist no longer."

The duke was so deeply affected with this charge of treason against a man for whom he had entertained so unbounded an esteem, that the whole

night he could enjoy no repose. The next morning he sent for Agolan, and after having bitterly reproached him for his ingratitude and perfidy, he ordered him that very day to quit the duchy if he did not wish the next to perish upon a gibbet.

These unexpected menaces, these cruel and unmerited reproaches so confounded the knight, that for some moments he was incapable of making an answer. The thought alone of being for ever separated from his beloved Vergy filled him with horror. But when he had recovered from his consternation he intreated the duke to call to mind his zeal and fidelity, and not condemn without proof, on the suggestion perhaps of some malignant enemy, a man whose bravery had been proved, and whose conduct had been irreproachable. "It is not an enemy," said the duke ; " it is the duchess herself who is your accuser ; dare you call in question her testimony ? " This atrocious conduct of the duchess filled Agolan with horror. He would not, however, accuse her, in order to justify himself ; but with an air of resignation he went no further than to say : " Sire, since her grace has complained of me, she doubtless conceives that she has good grounds for it, and I had better acquiesce ; besides, now that you are prejudiced against me, what steps could I take to prove my innocence ? "

The manner in which he delivered these words made its impression upon the duke. His former

attachment and esteem for the knight already began to operate in his favour; but this sentiment was checked by a malignant remark the duchess made on his indifference. That observation had struck the duke in a very singular manner, and he had scarcely a doubt upon his mind but that he, who had never yet been known to admire any of the court beauties, had conceived a passion for the duchess. To satisfy his scruples on this head, he required of Agolan to swear upon his honour that he would answer with truth a question that was about to be proposed to him. The knight, who perceived but one practicable method to preserve at once the friendship of his sovereign and the possession of his mistress, took the oath without hesitation. "Well," rejoined the duke, "you have never been known, either at court or elsewhere, to have had an attachment; and so long as I am in that uncertainty, I shall believe you guilty. Answer me without reserve. Have you any secret amour? who is the object of your affections? That is what I want to know, and what alone can cure me of my suspicions. Intrust me with the secret and admit me into that confidence which I think is due to my friendship; on that condition it is restored to you. But if you refuse, I shall consider you in no other point of view than that of a perfidious traitor, an object deserving my most indignant anger. Make your choice."

Then was Agolan made sensible of his impru-

dence in taking the proffered oath, and the cruel embarrassment of his situation. Could he dare to acknowledge to the duke the love he 'entertained for his niece? Could he transgress the inviolable secrecy that Vergy had required of him? If he declined an answer he added the guilt of perjury to the condemnation of banishment; if he spoke out, he betrayed his mistress; and in either case was sure to lose her.

Agitated and torn from one side to another by these distracting thoughts, he could not suppress his anguish. Tears gushed out, in spite of all his attempts to restrain them, and trickled down his cheeks. The duke, softened at the sight, endeavoured to confirm him with an oath which he made, in his turn, on the fealty due to him as a sovereign lord, never to reveal the secret he required to any living person in the universe; and he asked it again, less as the completion of an engagement than as a testimony of confidence and esteem. The knight could resist no longer; and at length avowed the dreadful mystery, the secret of his life. At first the duke withheld his belief of it. His niece lived in so profound a retreat that the confession of an intrigue seemed to him nothing more than a subtle falsehood. In vain did the knight relate to him the commencement and progress of this amour, the particulars of their meeting in the garden, and the signal of the little dog: he persisted obstinately to doubt of whatever

he was not an eye-witness to, and absolutely required of the happy lover, that he should be conducted to the rendezvous. Agolan could no longer refuse him this demand, after having granted the first. He agreed then with the duke on certain precautions; and at night they met at an appointed place, whence they set off together for the castle.

They had scarcely arrived in the garden before they heard the barking of the little dog, who ran towards Agolan and fondled on him. The duke then, pretending that his doubts were removed, bade adieu to the knight, as if what he had seen amounted to a sufficient proof; but he immediately afterwards returned and followed Agolan, with a full resolution to see how this mysterious adventure would terminate. The gate was half open. He saw the happy Agolan enter. He saw his niece, who had risen on the first signal, run and throw herself with transport into the arms of her lover. After a thousand caresses, she reproached him for his long absence, and expressed her joy at having again found him. She then conducted him into her apartment where they passed the night together in transports of which lovers only can have a conception.

The approach of day summoned Agolan to retire. The baroness, having fixed the time for their next meeting, led him back to the gate where, overwhelming him with tears and kisses, she took a tender farewell. The duke was a witness to this

scene, as he had been to the first meeting of the lovers. He had remained all night in the garden, less to gain further proof of the knight's innocence, of which he was now fully convinced, than to render him on the spot the justice that was due to him. The knight was no sooner out than he made up to him, embraced him, asked pardon for the injurious suspicions he had entertained, and assured him of his unalterable friendship. Agolan, surprised to see him there, conjured the duke by all that was most dear to him never to reveal the secret. "I should be ready to expire with grief," said he, "did I imagine that any other person in the world besides yourself had a suspicion of my amour."—"Say no more to me about it," answered the duke; "for from this moment I banish all recollection of it;" and instantly diverting the discourse to another subject, he conducted Agolan to the palace.

At dinner he seated the knight by his side, studiously showed him every kind of civility, and treated him with such marked attention that the duchess could not endure it. She pretended to be ill, and quitting the table in vexation, went and lay down in her chamber. The duke, who did not immediately suspect the cause of her sudden retreat, ran to her in great alarm, and as he inquired the cause of this sudden and extraordinary indisposition: "Have I not reason," said she, "to be disordered, when you show such indifference

towards me as to invite to our table the man who has given such deadly offence to us both? when, after the complaints I yesterday made of him, I observed you, no doubt to insult me, load him with caresses?"—"Madam," answered the duke, "tell me no more of his injuries. I know where his affections are placed. Speak to me no farther on the subject, for neither you nor any other person living can now deprive him of my friendship."

He then went out without waiting for a reply.

The duchess remained in consternation. After having met with a rebuff, she had the further mortification of finding that she had a rival; and to complete her misery, she was debarred from all knowledge of the person, and denied the means of revenge. The fury of her jealousy, nevertheless, inspired her with hopes of attaining it; and, reckoning upon the weak fondness of her husband, she resolved to force from him that very day the pernicious secret that caused her uneasiness. At night then, when the duke came to place himself by her side, she made a pretence to move from him, as if she were determined to renounce his bed. He held her, and embracing her affectionately, entreated her forbearance. "What a false deceiver you are," said she; "you affect here the language of love, and yet you never had a regard for me! For a long time, alas! have I been led away by your protestations; the fond belief indeed was pleasing; but now am I cruelly undeceived!"

—"How?" said the duke.—"Agolan has deceived you by his falsehoods, and you have believed him in preference to me. I do not require to know his tale, since you are determined to conceal it from me; but what distracts me is to meet with so bad a return for all my tenderness. Never has my heart, you well know, indulged a wish but it has been made known to you; never have I possessed a secret that was not intrusted to you. My chief pleasure was to go and repose it in your breast; and, in return, you now announce yours to me, only to inform me that I am not to be a partaker of them."

At these words she burst into tears, and sighed and sobbed so piteously, and with such imitation of real sorrow, that the duke began to soften. "My love," said he, "I cannot live under your displeasure; but know that I cannot with honour reveal what you require of me."—"Do not make such an avowal, my lord; but to deceive me use at least some more plausible pretext. Your tenderness has often intrusted me with secrets of much greater importance, and you know whether I ever gave you reason to repent your confidence. No. I must again repeat it; you are not apprehensive of my indiscretion; but your heart is estranged, and you no longer love me."

Her words were then cut short by sobs, and her face inundated with tears. The duke in vain sought to console her with caresses, they only con-

tributed to augment her sorrows. "No," cried he, "I can no longer withstand your grief, nor conceal anything from your love. You shall see how far the excess of mine can transport me; but take care never to betray me; for my vengeance would be dreadful, and I give you notice nothing less than your life could expiate it. Those are my conditions. Do you feel yourself capable of acceding to them?"—"Yes, I submit to them, ungrateful as you are, to think the fear of death can have greater power over me than the apprehension of your displeasure."

These words completed the business of seducing the weak, credulous duke. Love blinded him; he forgot his promise, and imprudently told his faithless wife the whole confession that Agolan had made. He neither omitted the rendezvous in the garden, of which he had been a witness, nor the well-contrived manœuvre of the little dog; nor above all, the tender affection that his niece showed towards the gallant knight.

Every word he uttered felt like the point of a dagger plunged into the bosom of the duchess. Yet she retained so far the command of her passions as to preserve her dissimulation, and renewed several times the oaths of secrecy that she had taken: but within she made vows of a very different nature, and was resolved to die rather than not be revenged on her rival. From that moment she gave up her mind to the contrivance of the

barbarous design ; day and night it haunted her imagination, and every instant that retarded it appeared to her an age.

She found, however, no opportunity to let loose her vengeance till Whitsuntide. The duke then held a plenary court, to which all the men and women of distinction in the duchy were invited. Vergy did not fail to attend. At the sight of her the duchess grew pale with rage and envy, and her frame was thrown into convulsions. She found means, nevertheless, to dissemble her emotion, and endeavoured to bestow more than ordinary attention on her niece. But when the ladies removed into her apartment, to prepare themselves for the ball, she exhorted them to gaiety and mirth. "As for you," said she to the Baroness de Vergy, "I commend you to the care of your particular friend."—"Madam," answered the lady with gentleness, "I know not whom you allude to ; I have no friends but what I may publicly avow, and who do credit both to my lord and myself."—"I believe it most sincerely, my gay niece ; when a woman is so dexterous, as to know how to employ little dogs to the best advantage, she need avow only what she pleases." The ladies paid no attention to a discourse which they did not understand, and went into the public room to begin the dances.

As for the baroness, who was ready to burst with shame and anguish, she slipped into a neighbouring closet, where she threw herself upon a couch,

and gave herself up to desperation, without so much as perceiving a female servant that was present. Her first complaints were reproaches to her lover, whom she suspected of having bought the duchess's heart at the price of perfidy to her. After giving vent to these outpourings she called upon death to relieve her, and, stretching out her arms as if to clasp her lover in a last forgiving embrace, she sank upon the couch, breathed a sigh, and expired.

Agolan was in the hall with the ladies, obliged from complaisance to join in their amusements, but he did not see her to whom his heart was attached, and his restless eyes sought her in every quarter. Surprised, at last, at her long absence, he inquired after her of the duke who, taking him by the hand, and pointing out to him the closet, desired him to go and seek her there. He entered with the eagerness of a lover, and beheld—heavens, what a sight!—a pale and breathless corpse. He sought in vain to bring her to life again by kisses; his warm lips met lips congealed by death. The servant, whom he perceived and interrogated, told him ingenuously all that she had heard and seen. Too well informed by this recital, he exclaimed, “O! thou tenderest and best of women, in recompense for so much love and fidelity, have I then betrayed thee? and art thou alone to suffer for it? No! I will do thee justice—thou shalt be revenged.” He then seized a sword, which he saw hanging

against the wall, plunged it into his heart, and fell at the feet of his mistress.

The affrighted girl ran into the hall, to bear the tidings of the two-fold mischief that she had witnessed. The duke, on entering the closet and beholding the sad spectacle, was fixed to the ground some moments with horror. Then seizing at once the sword, reeking with the blood of his unhappy friend, he returned to the duchess. "I had vowed your death," cried he, "if you betrayed me; die then, you are no longer fit to live." On which he stabbed her, and laid her dead at his feet. They cried out, and gave the alarm on all sides; the dances were stopped, and the company approached to view the awful sight. The duke then related to them the sad and deplorable adventure of the two lovers. In the relation of it his tears flowed abundantly, and all that were present wept with him. But when the bodies were produced, the whole company was dissolved in an agony of grief.

The next day, the duke celebrated the funeral of these two faithful lovers with regal honours, and erected a rich mausoleum in which he placed them, inclosed within the same tomb. Having fulfilled this duty, he next thought of the expiation of his crime. With this intention he took the cross, repaired to the Holy Land, and entered into the order of the Templars. He afterwards led a very exemplary life, but could never forget the

misfortunes he had occasioned by a single indiscretion. His appearance ever after indicated a rooted sorrow ; nor was a smile ever seen upon his lips. But he proved himself a valiant knight, and in the plains of Palestine sacrificed many a proud Saracen to the manes of his betrayed friend.

THE POOR SCHOLAR.

A YOUNG provincial scholar had travelled to Paris with a design of finishing his studies in the schools ; but after some stay there, having sold piece by piece the whole of his little property, he was obliged at last by necessity to leave the capital, and to travel homeward. He set out, then, and walked with all his speed, having no time to spare upon the road, and continued his march at the same rate the whole day, without taking any refreshment, for he was not worth a halfpenny.

When night however approached, it was necessary for him to think of an asylum. Happily he discovered a solitary habitation ; thither he bent his way, and having arrived at the door, prayed, in the name of God, that they would admit him. The master of the house, an honest and industrious man, had gone to his mill, and there was none at that time within, except the wife and a female servant. The former answered our traveller in a dry way that she never admitted any person in the absence of her husband. The poor scholar redoubled his entreaties : he urged the unhappy condition he was

in, and declared that the only favour he could expect would be a bundle of straw in the stable and a morsel of bread : but he received a harsher answer than before, and was ordered to go about his business.

As he was going away he saw a valet enter, with a basket containing two bottles of wine, which the wife took and placed in a corner. The maid servant at the same time put into a cupboard a cake, which she had just made, and a piece of pork, which she drew out of the pot. Not long after a priest made his appearance, wrapped up in his black mantle, who passed the scholar without saying a word, and slipped into the house.

All these circumstances increased the vexation of the traveller. Full of dismal thoughts, as one may suppose, oppressed by fatigue, almost fainting with hunger, and uncertain what would be his fate, he sat down a few paces distant, on one side of the road, to lament his wretched condition. A countryman passing by with a loaded horse heard his lamentations, and asked him the cause of them. "You behold," said the scholar, "one in the last extremity of despair, reduced, for want of an asylum, to pass the night on this spot."—"For want of an asylum!" answered the countryman; "why do you not go and knock at the door of that house opposite to you?"—"Alas! sir, I did, and was turned away."—"Turned away! say you? Know that the house is mine. Follow me, and we'll see whether a lodging cannot be provided for you."

The countryman took the traveller by the hand, and knocking at the door with the authority of a master, called his wife. She, not expecting him, was greatly surprised at his arrival. "Sir," said she to the priest, "hide yourself under this table ; I will make him go to bed early, and then you may have an opportunity to escape." Whilst the priest was withdrawing himself, she went to open the door. The countryman desired the scholar to enter. "Friend," said he, "lay down your hat, and take a seat. I desire that you will make yourself at home. I am a man that love ease, and hate ceremony: so, housewife, what have we in the house to set before our guest?"—"Nothing, husband. You know that, when you went to the mill, I did not expect that you would return to-night ; I therefore provided nothing."—"That's true : they sent me back sooner than I looked for, there being nought for them to do ; and I am glad of it, since it has been the cause of my falling in with this good man. But, by St Clement, nothing is rather too little."—"There was a piece of bread left ; but Catherine and I despatched it."—"It is not on my own account," replied the husband, "that I speak ; but for the sake of this poor traveller, whose walk must have given him a keen appetite."—"Well, since you have brought some flour, Catherine has nothing to do but to make you up something. A scanty meal is soon digested."

The husband swore bitterly at this bad luck ; but

there was no remedy. As for the scholar, who knew perfectly what the wife was about, and who had been a witness to the preparations for a good supper, he was secretly enraged, and would gladly have seized an opportunity of being revenged.

Whilst Catherine was about her work, the countryman requested the traveller either to sing or tell them a story. "For my own part," said he, "I am an ignorant man ; but I like men of sense, and those who know how to read and write. Come, friend, let us have something that will entertain us."—"I know neither song nor fable," answered the scholar, "and I am not one to lead you astray with falsehoods, or to tell idle stories without truth or reason. But I will relate to you, if you please, an adventure that happened to me this morning, and that put me into a dreadful fright."—Very well, sir ; let us have the account of your fright, and I shall be satisfied." The scholar then began as follows :—

"I had just crossed a wood, about three o'clock in the morning, when I perceived in the common a large drove of hogs. There were some of all kinds and sizes, great, small, white, black ; in a word, all manner of shapes and colours ; but I particularly admired the leader. It was fat, smooth, and plump, in short just such another as that must have been of which Catherine not long ago took a piece out of the pot."—"What, wife," interrupted the husband, "you have pork in the house ; and did not tell us of it !" The wife reddened, and as

she could get nothing by concealing the fact, acknowledged it. "Friend," said the countryman, "so far as I can see we are not likely to die with hunger ; it was lucky that you happened to fall in with the hogs. But, come, finish your story."—"Then, sir, I was saying that there was in the drove a remarkably fine hog. Now, this hog wandered a small distance from the rest. A wolf was laying wait for him ; he watched his opportunity, leaped upon him, and carried him off with as much expedition as the valet went hence some little time ago, after he had delivered his wine."—"How ! by St. Paul, have we got wine too !" cried the husbandman, "we are lucky rogues. My friend, that will wash down the pork. But, tell me, were there no dogs to pursue the wolf?"—"No ; the swineherd, I imagine, had not come out of the wood ; at least I did not see him. For my own part, I was extremely anxious to stop the plunderer ; but how was I to compass it ? By good luck I perceived at my feet a large stone. It was a prodigious size to throw ; by my faith, not less than the cake Catherine made to-night." At these words the wife was in the utmost confusion. "Yes, sir," said she, stammering ; "I desired her to prepare a cake—I wished to surprise you—it is made with eggs—you see that I did not forget you."—"God be thanked, wife ; surely I have no reason to be displeased at that. But, between ourselves, good luck to our guest and his fears, since they produce such good fare. So then, sir, you threw

the stone at the wolf.”—“ I threw it at him, as you say, and struck him with it. But this is the worst part of the story, and what gave me most alarm ; the animal let go the hog, and rushed towards me, grinding his teeth and looking furiously at me, just as the priest does this moment, who is under that table.”—“ A priest in my house !” cried the countryman ; “ ah ! wife, you bring gallants home when I am away ; and it was for him you prepared that fine supper !” On this, he took up a stick, and began to dress his wife handsomely. The priest, who foresaw that his turn would come next, endeavoured to make his escape ; but he was stopped and soundly beaten ; after which he was stripped, and in that condition turned out of doors. As for the poor scholar, he feasted upon the supper intended for the priest, and drank his wine ; and, on his departure in the morning, he was accoutred in the clerical spoils.

There is a vulgar proverb that says, Refuse relief to nobody, not even to one whom you may never expect to see again. This is a very judicious maxim ; for many persons, who may appear contemptible and beneath notice, are often capable of causing you a great deal of uneasiness. And this, in fact, was exemplified in our story. Had the woman granted an asylum to the scholar, when he requested it, he would have revealed nothing, the assignation would have been unknown to her husband, and she would have escaped a severe beating.

THE THREE THIEVES.

THREE rogues, in the vicinage of Lan, uniting the ingenuity of their talents, had for a considerable time put both monks and laymen under contribution. Two of them were brothers ; their names Hamet and Berard. Their father, who had followed the same profession, had just finished his career at the gallows. The name of the third was Travers. They never robbed or murdered ; but only pursued the business of pilfering and kidnapping, in which they had arrived to an astonishing degree of skill.

As they were walking together one day in the wood of Lan, and talking of their several feats of dexterity, Hamet, the eldest of the two brothers, espied at the top of a lofty oak a magpie's nest, and saw the mother fly into it. "Brother," said he to Berard, "what would you say to a person that should propose to go and take the eggs from under that bird without alarming it?"—"I should tell him," answered the younger brother, "that he was a fool, and proposed a thing impossible to be done."—"Well, learn, my friend, that he who cannot accom-

plish so practicable a theft, is but a booby in his profession. Observe me." This said, he immediately climbs the tree. Having reached the nest, he makes a hole in it underneath, receives softly in his hand the eggs, as they slip through the opening, and brings them down, desiring his companions to observe that not a single egg was broken. "By St Denis," cries Berard, "I must allow you to be an incomparable thief; but if you could go and replace the eggs under the mother, as quietly as you have taken them from her, we should acknowledge you our master."

Hamet accepts the challenge, and again mounts the tree: but his brother designed a trick upon him. The latter, as soon as he sees the other at a certain height, says to Travers, "You have just been a witness to Hamet's dexterity; you shall now see what I can do in the same way." He instantly climbs the tree, and follows his elder brother from branch to branch; and whilst the latter has his eyes fixed upon the nest, entirely taken up with his design, and watching every motion of the bird, the slippery rogue loosens his trousers, and brings them down as a signal of triumph. Hamet in the meantime, contrives to replace all the eggs, and coming down looks for the praise due to so clever an exploit. "Oh, you only want to deceive us," said Berard, bantering him; "I'll wager that you have concealed the eggs in your trousers." The other looks, sees that his trousers are gone, and soon finds out the

trick of his brother. "Excellent rogue," cried he, "to outwit another!"

As for Travers, he was lost in equal admiration of these two heroes, and could not determine which had the advantage. But he felt himself humbled at their superiority; and piqued at not being able to contend with them, cried, "Friends, you are too knowing for me. You would escape twenty times, when I should be the sacrifice. I perceive that I am too awkward to thrive in this business; so I shall go and follow my own trade. I renounce thieving for ever. I have good strong arms, and will return home and live with my wife; with the help of God, I shall be able to procure a subsistence." He fulfilled his declaration and returned to his village. His wife loved him; he became an honest man, and set himself to work with so much industry that, at the close of a few months, he had earned wherewithal to buy a hog. The animal was fattened at home. At Christmas he killed it, and having hung it in the usual way against the wall, he went into the fields. But it had been much better for him to have sold it. He would then have saved himself a vast deal of uneasiness.

The two brothers, who had not seen him since their separation, came at this very time to pay him a visit. The wife was alone spinning. She told them that her husband had just gone out, and that he would not return till night. With eyes accustomed to examine everything, you might have

sworn the hog could not escape their notice. "Oh, ho," said they, on going out, "this fellow is about to regale, and did not think us worth inviting! Well, we must carry off his pork, and eat it without him." The rogues then laid their plot, and till night should enable them to act, they went and concealed themselves behind a neighbouring hedge.

At night, when Travers returned, his wife told him of the visit she had received. "I was much alarmed," said she, "at being alone with them; they had so suspicious an appearance, that I did not venture to ask either their name or business. But they searched every corner with their eyes; I don't think a single peg escaped their notice."—"Ah! it must have been my two queer companions," cried Travers in great trouble; "my hog is lost; I now heartily wish that I had sold it."—"We have still a resource," said the wife. "Let us take down the pork, and hide it somewhere for the night. To-morrow morning you may consider what is to be done." Travers adopted his wife's advice. He took down the pork and laid it under the bread oven, at the opposite end of the room; after which he lay down, but not with his mind perfectly at ease.

Night having come, the two brothers arrived to accomplish their project; and while the eldest kept watch, Berard began to penetrate the wall in that part where he had seen the pork hanging. But he quickly perceived that nothing was left except the string by which it had been suspended. "The bird

has flown," said he; "we have come too late." Travers, whom the dread of being robbed kept awake, thinking he heard a noise, roused his wife and ran to the oven to feel if the pork was there; but as he was also apprehensive for his barn and stable, he determined to make the circuit of them, and went out armed with a hatchet. Berard, who heard him go out, took the advantage of that opportunity to pick open the door; and approaching the bed, and counterfeiting the voice of the husband, "Mary," said he, "the pork is removed from the wall, what have you done with it?"—"Don't you remember, then, that we put it under the oven," answered the wife. "What, has fear turned your brain?"—"No, no," replied the other, "I had only forgotten. But stop, I will secure it," in saying which, he lifted the pork upon his shoulders and ran off.

After having gone his rounds and visited carefully his doors, Travers returned to the chamber. "I have got a husband," said the woman, "who, it must be confessed, has a curious head upon his shoulders; to forget the next moment what he has done with his pork." At these words Travers set up a cry, "I told you they would steal it from me; it is gone and I shall never see it more!" Yet as the thieves could not be gone far, he had still some hope of recovering it, and instantly ran after them.

They had taken a bye-path across the fields, that

led towards the wood, where they intended to hide their booty. Hamet went before, to secure their way, and the brother, whose load was a considerable impediment, followed him at a small distance. Travers soon came up with the latter. He saw him plainly, and recognised him. "You must be somewhat tired," said he, assuming the voice of the elder brother; "give me the load, and let me take my turn." Berard, who thought his brother Hamet was speaking to him, gives Travers the pork, and walks on. But he had not proceeded a hundred yards, ere, to his great astonishment, he falls in with Hamet. "Zounds," cried he, "I have been ensnared. That rogue Travers has taken me in; but let me see if I cannot make amends for my folly."

He then stript himself, put his shirt over his clothes, made himself a kind of woman's cap, and in that trim ran as fast as he could by another path to the house of Travers, whose arrival he awaited at the door. As he sees Travers approach, he comes forward as his wife, to meet him, and asks with a feigned voice, whether he had recovered the pork. "Yes, I have it," answered the husband.—"Well, give it me, and run quickly to the stable; for I heard a noise there, and I fear they have broken in." Travers threw the carcase upon the other's shoulders, and went once more to make his round. But when he returned into the house, he was surprised to find his wife in bed, crying and half dead with fear. He then perceived he had

been again cheated. Nevertheless he was determined not to despair ; and, as if his honour were concerned in this adventure, he vowed not to give up the contest, till by some means or other he should come off victorious.

He suspected that the thieves this trip would hardly take the same road ; but he knew the forest was the place they would make for, and accordingly went the shortest way to it. They had in fact already got there, and in their triumph and eagerness to taste the fruit of their dexterity, they had just lighted a fire at the foot of an oak to broil a piece of the meat. The wood was green, and burned but indifferently ; so that, to make it blaze they were obliged to go and gather some dried leaves and rotten branches.

Travers, whom the light soon directed to the thieves, took the advantage of their distance from the fire. He stripped himself entirely naked, climbed the oak, suspended himself by one arm in the position of one who had been hanged ; and when he saw the rogues return and busy themselves again in blowing up the fire, he roared out with a voice like thunder : " Unhappy wretches ! you will come to the same end with me ! " The two brothers in confusion imagined they saw and heard their father, and thought of nothing but making their escape. The other quickly snatches his clothes and his pork, returns in triumph to his wife, and gives her an account of his recent victory.

She congratulated him on so bold and well-executed a manoeuvre. "Let us not yet flatter ourselves with too much security," said he. "These queer fellows are not far off, and so long as the pork lasts I shall not think it out of danger. But boil some water: we'll dress it; and, if they return, we shall see what method they will devise to get hold of it again." The one then made a fire, while the other divided the carcase, and put it piece by piece into the kettle; they both then seated themselves to watch it, one on each side of the fire-place.

But Travers, who was almost exhausted for want of rest, and fatigued by the operations of the night, soon began to show a propensity to sleep. "Go, and lay yourself down," said the wife, "I will take care of the pot; all is fastened; there is nothing to fear: and at all events, if I should hear a noise, I'll give you notice." On this assurance, he threw himself in his clothes upon the bed, and immediately fell fast asleep. The wife continued for some space of time to watch the cauldron; but drowsiness began to overpower her likewise, and at last she fell asleep in her chair.

In the meantime our thieves, after recovering from their alarm, had returned to the oak; but finding there neither pork nor man in chains they easily unravelled the plot. They conceived themselves dishonoured if, in this conflict of stratagems, Travers should finally have the advantage. So they

returned to his house, resolved for this last time to strain their ingenuity to the utmost.

Before they undertook anything, Berard looked through the hole he had made in the wall, to see if the enemy was upon guard. He saw on the one hand Travers stretched out upon his bed, and on the other the wife, whose head nodded from one side to another, with a ladle in her hand, while the pork was boiling in the cauldron. "They had a mind to save us the trouble of cooking it," said Berard to his brother; "and indeed it was the least they could do, considering what work they have given us already. Be steady, and rest assured that I will help you to some of it." He then goes and cuts down a long pole, which he sharpens at one end. With this pole he climbs upon the roof, and letting it down through the chimney, he sticks it into a piece of pork and raises it up.

Travers at that instant happened to awake. He saw the manœuvre, and judged that with such expert enemies peace was preferable to war. "Friends," cried he, "you have not done right in breaking through the roof of my house; and I have also been to blame in not inviting you to partake of my pork. Let us contend no longer for the superiority in artifice; for it is a contest that would never have an end: but come down, and let us feast together."

He went and opened the door to them. They sat down together at table, and were heartily reconciled to each other.

THE WIFE THAT TRIED HER HUSBAND.

IN a certain town in France, there lived a very old baron, who had the character of a prudent and sagacious man. Being a bachelor and possessed of a considerable estate, his friends pressed him to marry.

Seldom does an old man take that step without getting into trouble. "Procure me a woman," said he, "to my liking, and I'll engage to make her my wife." His friends introduced to him a young girl, fair, well proportioned, and engaging. The instant he saw her, he was enamoured, and offered her his hand. I mentioned before that he was not in the prime of his youth and vigour : and, in short, was not exactly what a young woman would fancy. The bride, however, put up with her condition for at least a twelvemonth, though her patience was put to a severe trial.

At length, at the expiration of that period, she said to her mother, on meeting her as they came from church, "You know what sort of a husband you have provided for me ; I must give you notice that I am now tired of him, and have resolved to

take a lover." The mother used many sound arguments to dissuade her daughter from so dangerous a design ; but finding her remonstrances had no effect, " Daughter," said she, " observe at least the advice which I am going to give you. You are about to make yourself very miserable, unless you can assure yourself of the greatest meekness and forbearance on the part of your husband. Before you venture to provoke him, try whether he is likely to put up with it ; sound his disposition, and put his patience to the proof by some experiment ; in a word, see how far ill-humour or passion may carry him."

" I shall take the hint," answered the daughter. " In his garden there is a tree, which he planted with his own hand. He takes a delight in sitting under the shade of it, and sometimes has me there with him to chat or to play at draughts. I'll cut it down and see what he will say to it."—" Do so, but take care beforehand that you have not cause to repent what you are about."

When the young wife returned home, her husband had not come back from hunting. She called a servant, and ordered him to take a hatchet and follow her to the garden. When they came to the tree, " Cut this down," said she. —" What, madam ; my master's tree ? Excuse me, if you please, from felling that."—" Obey me, I say, I will have it cut down." On the repeated refusal of the servant, she snatched the axe, and began

chopping the tree on every side, till she brought it to the ground. She then carried it away.

At this instant the baron entered the house, and seeing his wife bend under the load, asked what she was carrying. "On my return from church, my lord," said she, "I was told you were out a-hunting. Fearful lest you might come in wet or cold, I was determined to have a good fire for your reception, and having no wood ready cut, I went myself to bring some from the garden."—"So, madam! you have cut down my favourite tree, that which you knew I was so strongly attached to!"—"It did not occur to me, my lord; I thought of nothing but your health."—"Such forgetfulness, madam, is rather extraordinary; but for the sake of peace and quiet in the house, I shall say no more, but accept your apology." Nothing further passed upon the subject.

The next day the wife went to seek her mother, to acquaint her with what she had done to try her husband's temper. "Well, daughter, what did he say to you?"—"Nothing: at first his eyes seemed to portend a storm; but he became all at once calm and mild as a lamb, and concluded by approving my conduct. So, now that I am certain of his easiness of temper, and that I have nothing to fear, I may with safety take a lover."—"Daughter, once more let me advise you not to be too sure. I know not how or wherefore, but my mind forebodes that you will repent your folly

The baron has not the mien of so meek a creature as you represent him ; and if you take my advice, you will try him once more.”—“ To please you, mother, I will make another experiment : and it shall be this ; he has a little greyhound which is as precious to him as one of his eyes. He feeds it every day himself, and suffers it to lie on his bed at night. In short, he has so tender a regard for it that I am persuaded, were any of the servants to hurt it even through heedlessness, they would be that instant discharged. I ’ll kill it in his presence, and we ’ll see what will be the consequence.”—“ Be it so ; and may you receive no mischief from it.”

The wife, on her return, found that the baron was, as before, in the field. She made a large fire, then covered the bed with a fine counterpane, and took care that all the chairs had gowns and robes spread out upon them. As her husband was coming home, she went to meet him at the door, took off his cloak and spurs with her own hands, threw over his shoulders a scarlet mantle lined with fur, and placed him a seat near the fire. The dog, after coming to caress his master, leaped as usual upon a chair, and consequently got upon one of the lady’s robes.

She, perceiving a labourer just coming in from work, snatched the knife that hung at his girdle, and struck the animal so violently with it that the blood spurted upon her petticoat. The husband rose in a rage. “ How, madam ! dare you kill

my greyhound, and before my face too?"—"Sir, I cannot make light as you do of all the mischief that this dirty animal causes every day in the house. There is a gown that I have put on but once; see what a condition it is now in: indeed, this is not to be borne."—"Madam, this is the second time you have purposely offended me. I beg it may be the last: you will do well to observe what I say, for I shall not caution you a third time."—"I am conscious, sir, of having deprived you of what you took delight in, and am sorry for it: since I have been so unfortunate as to incur your displeasure, I ask pardon and submit to your resentment." At the same time to see what effect her tears would have on the feelings of the old man, the artful wanton began to sob and weep. He was affected at this semblance of sorrow, embraced his wife, pronounced her pardon, and said no more on the subject for the remainder of the evening.

The following day our dame had a new victory to boast, and consequently a fresh visit to make to her mother. "Madam," said she, "I am resolved, and from this day will enjoy my gallant."—"You are determined, then, not to give up your design?"—"Certainly not."—"But it is so easy to be prudent. I am now more than double your age, and your father had never, as you well know, the least cause to complain of me on that head."—"Oh! there is a wide difference between our cases.

My father was a young man when he married you, and you in your turn had no reason to complain of him ; but for my part, you know what kind of a husband I am united to. In short, I must have some one to make me amends.”—“Have you fixed upon the particular person?”—“Assuredly. For some time our chaplain has made love to me. It is he whom I shall accept as a lover.”—“What, a priest, daughter?”—“Yes, madam, I will not have a knight, to come and carry off my jewels, then pawn them, and (publishing my weakness) make me a public jest.”—“My dear girl, in the name of God, avoid reproach ; take care that you do not rush upon your ruin, but follow the advice and example of your mother : yet if you will not be brought back to reason, let me prevail upon you at least to make a third trial. Your husband’s menaces have given me, I must confess, great alarm, and I cannot drive some unlucky presages from my mind. You are not aware, daughter, how terrible an old fellow he is in his resentment.”—“Well, mother, next Thursday being Christmas-day, my husband is then to hold a plenary court. At his own table, and in the very face of all his guests, will I again try his patience, since you require it. But remember, after this experiment, not to insist upon another ; for it shall positively be the last.”—“Pray to God that you may not, my good daughter, have reason to repent it.”

Christmas being come, all the baron's vassals, together with a great number of ladies, were invited to the festival. At dinner, whilst they were upon the first course, as the squire had just carved the meat, his wife, who was eating out of the same dish with the seneschal, entangles the keys hanging at her waist with the fringe of the table-cloth. She afterwards gets up, as it were to go out of the room, when she drags with her table-cloth, plates, and dishes, and brings all to the ground together with a terrible crash. The company cry out and the enraged husband darts a glance of lightning at her. "Alas, my lord, I am vastly concerned at the accident; but, see, it was not owing to any awkwardness of mine." In saying which she labours to disengage the keys from the table-cloth, and with all the symptoms of violent anger tears the fringe entirely off. The baron had still resolution enough to contain himself. He did not show the least sign of ill-humour, or betray any marks of vexation, but did no more than give directions for another course to be served up. In a minute all was set right. The company again took their seats, and the entertainment seemed as if it had been rather enlivened than crossed by the accident.

During supper at night the old gentleman assumed the same air of satisfaction; but the next morning, before his wife was up, he entered her chamber with a surgeon. "Madam," said he,

addressing himself to her, "you had before played two tricks upon me, and I was silly enough to excuse them ; and this no doubt encouraged you to have recourse to the same practice. You yesterday indulged in your third frolic ; but I shall take care that it is the last. I know the cause of your petulance. You have some vicious blood in your veins ; we must see and have it drawn off. So arise." He then ordered the surgeon to perform the operation. She, thus informed of his purpose, arose, declaring in a peremptory tone that she was not indisposed, and would not suffer herself to be bled. But the husband, still more peremptory, drew his sword, and obliged her to submit. They then bandaged both her arms, pierced a vein in each, and let the blood run till she fainted ; after which they put her again to bed.

Her senses no sooner returned, than she sent for her mother to come to her with all haste. The good woman arrives, and finds her daughter pale as death, and so feeble that she had scarcely power to speak. "Well ! daughter, are you still disposed to have a gallant ?"—"Ah, never, mother, never !"—"I warned you of the consequence, and wish you had spared yourself this lesson. I congratulate you, however, on your having gone no farther than the proof : for if you had played a trick with the chaplain, your bleeding might have been more dangerous."

THE SEXTON OF CLUNY.

HUGH, a townsman of Cluny, followed the joint occupations of banker and merchant. On his return one day from a fair with various merchandises, and among others with cloth of Amiens, he was attacked in a forest by robbers, who carried away his carts. Obligated, in order to satisfy his creditors, to dispose of the small property he had remaining, he found himself entirely ruined. Idoine his wife then proposed to him to retire into France, where she had relations ; and they fixed upon the third day for their departure. But the sexton of the monastery, who had for a long time loved Idoine, wished to take advantage of their embarrassed circumstances to obtain from the fair one certain favours which till then he had solicited in vain. He made her an offer of a hundred livres, a sum which his being treasurer to the monastery made it easy for him to command. The wife, tempted by so considerable an offer, which would at once make amends for her losses in housekeeping, feigned to surrender, and in concert with her husband appointed a rendezvous with the monk that very night.

The time having arrived, our ecclesiastic escaped secretly by one of the church gates, of which he kept the key. He delivered the sum agreed on to the wife, and prepared to accomplish the other part of the bargain, when the husband suddenly appeared, armed with a bludgeon. Hugh raised his arm and made a blow at the sexton, merely to frighten him and drive him away. But unfortunately it fell upon his head, and killed him on the spot. The husband and wife were then thrown into the utmost consternation. What, cried they, would be their lot, when daylight should discover the dead body in their house ! They were in such trouble that, if the gates of the town had been open, they would have made their escape that instant. However, necessity inspiring them with resolution, Idoine proposed carrying the body back into the convent through the church door, of which the sexton had the keys. Hugh raised him up on his shoulders, and accompanied by his wife who went to open the gate, he took and placed him upright against the door of a certain apartment.

In the course of the night the prior of the monastery had occasion to get up, and repair to the place where the dead man stood ; and he pushed open the door with such violence that the body tumbled down with a prodigious noise. He imagined, on examining the body, that he had killed the sexton ; and this accident was the more dangerous, as the night before having had a

quarrel with him, he was liable to be charged with murder before the abbé. The best expedient he could devise, in this puzzling emergency, was to go and place the body at the door of some handsome dame, that his death might be ascribed to the vengeance of a husband. Now, the house of Idoine being the nearest, he went and placed it there, sounded a loud rap on the door, and made off.

It had been all over with this good couple if they had happened then to be asleep. The dead body being found at their door the next morning, they would inevitably have been apprehended ; and the consciousness of their guilt would quickly have betrayed them. But Idoine, hearing the noise, made her husband get up. When they saw the carcase of the monk, they gave themselves up for lost, concluding that the devil had brought him back again for their destruction. In order to counteract the designs of the malignant spirit, Idoine gave her husband a serip, on which was inscribed the name of God. Protected by this sacred charm, Hugh resumed his courage, and lifted up a second time the sexton's body to carry it off and get rid of it somewhere.

As he passed by the house of Thibault, a farmer belonging to the convent, he perceived a heap of dung lying there, and conceived an idea of burying the sexton under it ; to which he was further urged by the recollection that, as the sexton frequented

Thibault's house, the latter might be supposed to have killed him. As he began to make an opening in the straw, he found a sack to all appearance full. "Oh, oh!" said he to himself, "has this fellow too killed his monk? Well, they will be good company for each other, and he shall have the credit of them both." Hugh then untied the sack, and was greatly surprised to find a hog within it. In fact Thibault had killed one against the approaching Christmas festival; but two thieves had come that night to steal it from him, and, waiting till it was late enough for them to carry it off without danger, they had concealed it under the dunghill, and had gone to drink at a neighbouring tavern. Hugh, without considering whom the hog belonged to, takes it out of the sack, puts the monk in its place, and returns home with his prey.

The two rogues had at the tavern fallen in with some jolly fellows of the same profession, and engaged in a drinking bout with them. One of the company having accidentally observed that the wine would taste better if they had a piece of broiled pork along with it, one of the two thieves offered to treat his companion with what he longed for, and instantly went to the dunghill for his hog. He returned to his friends with the sack: and at the sight of it they exclaimed at the fine size of the animal. They then asked for wood and made a fire. One runs for a knife, another for a gridiron,

a third for straw. Meanwhile the servant girl unties the sack, and raises the bottom to let the hog drop out : when suddenly out rolls the monk. She sets up a terrible cry ; the master of the house himself runs up, and asks who committed the murder. " I killed no one," answered the thief ; " but had only purloined a hog, and the devil, to trick me, has turned it into a monk. At any rate, it belongs to Thibault, and I am resolved the clodpole shall not lose his bargain." The rogue then returns to the farmer's house, and fixes the corpse by the neck to the same cord by which the hog had been suspended.

All this could not be done without noise. Thibault, awaking, went to feel if his hog was in the right place ; but the cord, too slight for its new weight, snaps all at once, and the monk falls upon the farmer and knocks him down. This last cries out for help to his wife and servants, who come with lights, and find him lying under the sexton.

Thibault soon recognised the dead man. He was not without his fears lest, in case the sexton should be found in his house, he might be accused of the murder. He therefore began to consider the means of getting rid of him immediately ; for day was already dawning. In his stable there was a young colt, that had never been broken in, and consequently was quite wild. He desired it might be brought to him, placed the monk on its back, and tied him to the saddle that he might not slip off ;

then after having fixed a lance in his hand and slung a shield to his shoulder, to make him appear like an armed knight, he drove the horse with a smart stroke of his whip into the town. At the same time, he and his servants ran after the beast, crying out with all their force, "Stop the monk ! stop the monk !" These cries, joined with those of the mob, made the colt still wilder. He galloped on at full speed, and, the gate of the convent being open, rushed into it. The prior, happening to meet him there, and not having time to get out of the way, was struck with the lance and killed upon the spot. The monks ran on all sides, crying, "Have a care, the sexton has gone mad !" Twenty times running did the frightened horse traverse the gardens and the cloisters. Thence he rushed into the kitchen, where he destroyed everything in his way, and broke both shield and lance against the walls. At length, in running about from place to place, he comes to a large hole, dug for the purpose of forming a well, and goes headlong to the bottom with his rider. It was to this fall they attributed the death of the sexton. No one knew the whole of the adventure. As for Hugh he had the good fortune to gain a hog and a hundred livres. Thibault was the only loser, for he lost his hog ; but he got amply repaid by the monks for the death of his colt.

THE NORMAN KNIGHT.

A POOR knight of Normandy, who lived in the time of the Crusades, when St Jean d'Acre was beleaguered and taken, found one day, in the course of his adventures, that there was nothing for his dinner but a single small loaf. He went to an inn, and asked for a pennyworth of wine to moisten his bread. But the landlord, who was a churlish and coarse fellow, thrust into his hand a great beaker, and did so in such a rough manner that half the liquor was spilled. "Ah!" he exclaimed, sarcastically, "you're sure to be lucky now, Sir Knight; for it is a proverb, you know, that the spilling of wine is the beginning of fortune."

The knight disdained to take notice of this uncivil raillery, but he thought presently of a better method of having his revenge. He had still a crust of bread left in his pouch, and pulling this out, he begged the tavern-keeper to be so good as to spare him a small piece of cheese to eat with his crust.

Mine host acceded to the request with indifferent

grace, and went his way in quest of what was wanted. While he was absent for a moment or two at the back, the knight stepped nimbly into the parlour, where the cask of wine was standing, and removing the bung, let the liquor run all over the floor.

When the landlord came back with the slice of cheese, he saw at a glance the mischief which had been done. His first idea, of course, was to rush up to the barrel, and put in the bung; then in a boiling rage, he rushed upon the offender, whom he seized by the collar, threatening to thrash him soundly for his pains. But the knight lifted him up in his arms like a child, and hurled him on to the half-empty wine cask, which with the weight of the corpulent landlord's person, added to the violence of the shock, went to shivers. The noise attracted some of the neighbours who, when the circumstances were understood, delivered up the knight into custody for assault and damage.

The affair was brought for hearing before the court. The innkeeper was allowed to speak first; and, after stating the case in his own fashion, he proceeded to demand indemnity for the injuries done to him and the loss of his wine. But when it was the prisoner's turn to defend his conduct, he put the whole matter in a very different light, and concluded thus: "This person informed me," said he to the judge, "when he made me spill only half a tumbler of wine, it was the most fortunate event which

could have happened to me, for he declared there was a proverb to that effect; and, consequently, I thought that one good turn deserved another, and followed his generous example by spilling half a cask, for, I thought, if such virtue is in so small a quantity as he spilled for me, how much greater must there be in that which I spilled out of regard for him?"

The court was so unanimously with the knight, and the judge enjoyed so hearty a laugh at the landlord's expense, that the latter was glad enough to get away, and leave his adversary the master of the situation. The only sentence which the court thought it necessary to deliver on that occasion was, that "what is spilled, is spilled."

THE HOUND AND THE SERPENT.

THERE dwelt at Rome, once upon a time, a very rich man who was seneschal of the city, and whose house stood contiguous to the walls. He was childless ; for his wife, although they had been married nine years, had not yet presented her lord with an heir. She was a lady of high blood and singular virtue, and this circumstance was the only obstacle to their perfect happiness. It happened, however, in the tenth year of their union, that this cloud over their life was removed, and that a son was born to the seneschal.

Great was the joy everywhere when the news was circulated, for the seneschal was as dearly beloved at Rome on account of his courteous manners and his upright character, as his wife was for her charitable disposition and gentleness of heart. The only thought of the enraptured parents henceforward was the careful nurture of the child so providentially bestowed upon them. He received every care and every tenderness possible ; and he promised, as he grew up, to become a comfort and honour to the fortunate couple in their old age.

The seneschal kept in his house a bear, which was fastened up in the outer court. At the Feast of Pentecost, the same year which witnessed the consummation of the seneschal's conjugal felicity, the people of Rome, to amuse themselves, begged the loan of this bear, that they might bait him with dogs. He did not like to disappoint them, and consented to let the animal go for the purpose. The spot selected was a spacious piece of open ground on the banks of the Tiber, and there everybody in the city, with very few exceptions, hastened on the morning which was fixed for the sport, to witness so rare a spectacle. The College of Cardinals was well represented; the nobility, the priesthood, the fair sex, multitudes of all ranks congregated there, and some brought dogs with them, while others came without.

The seneschal, for his part, thought that his wife might be entertained by the bear-baiting, and they were accordingly among the spectators. No one remained, indeed, at home, except the child and its nurses, and a beautiful young hound some twelve or thirteen months old, to which his master was exceedingly attached, and which he had shut up in the house before he left, for fear he might attempt to follow him, and so be lost in the crowd.

But the nurses had scarcely been left alone an hour when, with the curiosity natural to women, they began to die to catch some glimpse of what was going on at a short distance from the house.

The breeze wafted to them even the sound of the people's voices, shouting and hallooing, and the girls grew more and more excited every moment. A thought struck them, and they acted upon it. There was not a soul in the house but themselves, and the baby could take no possible harm, they said to one another, for half an hour or so, while they enjoyed the sight from the turret casement. The little child was put to bed and rocked to sleep, and the nurses, having laid the cot safely on the ground, ran off without losing an instant, and soon forgot everything in the absorbing interest with which they watched from the turret the operations on the river side.

The house of the seneschal was encompassed by a thick wall in which age had worn crevices and even large hollows. There was a deep and wide cavity in which, unknown to the inmates, a huge snake had made its nest.

It so chanced that the thoughtless women, in their hurry to mount the turret, that they might lose as little of the amusement as possible, forgot to close the window of the nursery; and the snake, happening to be abroad, and perceiving the casement ajar, glided stealthily in.

The little child was in its cradle, still asleep, and the big snake crept along the floor, scenting prey. The favourite dog of the seneschal was lying on the nurses' bed, and pricked up his ears at the sound of the rattle, by which the reptile could

not help making his approach known. A beautiful instinct prompted the faithful animal to leap from the couch, and place himself in front of the child's cot. He was soon engaged in a deadly conflict with the snake, and was bleeding from every pore.

The struggle was so violent and fierce that, in the course of it the child's cot was completely overturned, and it was a perfect miracle that the seneschal's son was not killed on the spot. But it happened, as if by some interposition of Divine Providence, that the cradle fell with the utmost nicety over its tiny occupant, and left him not only protected from further attack, but still unawakened. At length, after a terrible encounter, the dog succeeded in vanquishing his foe and killing him. The boy's preserver returned to his place on the bed, but remained watching still, not knowing what other dangers might be in store for his young master.

When the bear-baiting was over, and the spectators began to disperse, the three women descended from the turret, and beheld the cradle upside down, the child apparently buried beneath it, the marks of blood upon his clothes, and the dog on the bed. They concluded that their precious charge had been strangled by the animal while they were away, and without staying to look any further, they fled from the house, dreading the return of the enraged parents. But in their fright they chose the very road which the seneschal and

his wife would necessarily take, and the first object which they met was, in fact, the latter on horseback, followed at a short distance by her husband.

Their mistress stopped them, for their manner and appearance told her plainly that something was amiss at home. "Where are you going?" she cried; "what has occurred?" Her first thought was for the child, and she added, "Is my child dead? Speak, for heaven's sake! Let me know the whole truth!"

They sank down on their knees before her, imploring her forgiveness, and they confessed that, having been imprudent enough to go up into the turret for a few moments to see the bear-baiting, the young dog who was left in the house had, during their brief absence, strangled the child.

The lady, when she heard all, fell from her horse insensible. The seneschal, who was close behind, galloped up, and demanded what was the matter. He found her as white as ashes and unconscious. The sound of his voice seem to rouse her faculties a little, and she collected sufficient strength to repeat to him, in the weakest and most heart-broken accents, what she had just heard from the nurses' lips.

The report struck the seneschal dumb. Without saying a word, he spurred his horse on, alighted mechanically at his own gate, and rushed up to the room where the alleged tragedy had taken place.

Directly he threw the chamber door open, the

dog ran up to lick and caress him. Notwithstanding the agony which he suffered from his wounds and loss of blood, the animal exhibited his delight by a thousand affectionate tricks. He seemed to wish to have it in his power to describe the peril to which the seneschal's son had been exposed, and how he was happily the means of saving him from a cruel fate.

The seneschal repulsed him sternly. He saw his muzzle still moist with gore; he eyed the cradle, with its contents soattered as it lay in confusion on the floor; and underneath, he imagined to himself, the murdered corpse of the heir of his house and lands. His passion worked itself into phrenzy, and under an ungovernable impulse, he snatched his sword from the scabbard, and severed the dog's head from its shoulders. In a paroxysm of despair and sorrow, mingled with some contrition perhaps for his act, he then cast himself on the nurses' bed, and bewailed his destiny.

The groans and heavy sighs awakened the little child, who had slumbered so far in security beneath the cot, and he uttered a cry.

The father sprang from the bed amazed, and hastened to him. He lifted the cradle, and the child was there uninjured as he had left him, with a smile on its face. He shouted for his wife, for his servants, for everybody, and as they returned in small parties from the day's sport, they crowded to the scene. There was joy on every countenance

and in every heart, when it was known that it was a false alarm, and that the seneschal's son was safe.

When the first delightful surprise had had time to subside a little, it became natural on the part of all to wonder what the true meaning could be of the blood which smeared the dog's mouth, and stained the floor and the bed-clothes. Every corner of the apartment was searched, and they had no difficulty in discovering the remains of the large snake, stiff and cold in death. Its head was bitten off, and the prints of the dog's teeth were there. The hound and the serpent had fought, and the hound was the victor, after a sanguinary contest. The seneschal regarded the noxious reptile so opportunely destroyed, his son so providentially rescued, and the dog, to whom he owed so much, weltering in its blood. He was the unconscious assassin of his greatest benefactor. His remorse was unspeakable. His trusty hound he ordered to be buried with almost human honours, and during the remainder of his life, the wealthy seneschal never ceased to lament the deed of which he had been guilty, and upbraided himself as bitterly as if the victim of his wrath had been a fellow-creature.

THE HERMIT THAT BROKE HIS NECK.

A HERMIT had constructed his cell on the brow of a hill that was situated close to a wood, in which a robber had established himself to plunder the travellers passing that way. The man of God met the robber one day, and preached to him with so much energy and with such effect, that the rogue fell upon his knees, confessed his crimes, and implored forgiveness. The hermit enjoined him never to tell a falsehood, and to render to his neighbour all the services in his power. The robber returned to his place of abode, determined to observe the injunctions of the hermit in both those particulars.

In crossing the wood he descried two naked men, who had been stripped by other thieves, and tied with their hands behind their backs to a tree. He instantly ran to their rescue. As he advanced towards them, a branch of the tree struck him in the eye, and knocked it out ; but the pain it gave him was not powerful enough to prevent him from accomplishing the charitable office he had undertaken. He even went so far in his benevolence as to give them a part of his clothes to cover them.

A few minutes after he perceives a leper who, in the attempt to cross a river on horseback, is hurried away by the current, and in danger of being drowned. Our penitent throws himself into the water, swims to the drowning man, catches him in his arms, brings him safe upon the bank, and presents him with his purse. At that very instant he perceives three armed knights. Their brother had a few days before been killed by the robber, whom they are in search of to revenge the murder. Thinking they see him, by the description they had received of him, they ask him, in a threatening manner, if he is not the assassin of the forest. He, recollecting that he has been enjoined not to utter a falsehood, tells them plainly that he was. They instantly stab him. He dies, forgiving them his death; and angels descending from heaven carry up his soul with shouts of joy.

The triumphant ascension is perceived by the hermit, and excites his envy. "What!" says he to himself, "is this abominable outlaw saved for an hour or two of penitence! After a whole life of assassinations and robberies, two or three good actions clear him. I am then, surely, a madman to have come and wasted here the prime of my life, to have abstained from all pleasures, and for the course of fifty years to have fasted, watched, and worn sackcloth. Since Paradise is earned so cheaply, let who will be a hermit for my part, I renounce
fession. I'll return into the world, and after

I have enjoyed myself thoroughly there, when I perceive death approaching, I'll repent, ask forgiveness, and be saved like that robber." Having finished these words, the hermit gives his hut a kick to knock it down; but in his fury he loses his balance, rolls down the hill, breaks his neck, and dying, is carried into hell by devils.

THE MINSTREL WHO WAS TURNED OUT OF HELL.

A MONKISH TALE.

THERE lived formerly at Sens a minstrel, the best-natured fellow on earth, who at any price would not have had a dispute with a child, but a man without conduct, and the most irregular that ever lived. He passed his life in gaming or at the tavern, unless he was at still worse places: if he earned a little money, directly he carried it thither; was he without, he left his fiddle in pawn. Thus always tattered, penniless, and often barefoot, or in his shirt exposed to the north wind and rain, he would have excited your pity. Notwithstanding this, gay, content, and his head at all times covered with a chaplet of green leaves, he sang without ceasing, and would have asked but one thing of God, which was to have made the week all Sundays.

At last he died. A young devil, still a novice, who for a month past had been running up and down to snap up some soul without having been

able, notwithstanding all his trouble to succeed, being by accident near the spot when our fiddler slipped off, took him upon his back, and, quite joyous at his success, carried him to hell.

It was exactly the hour when the devils returned from their hunting. Lucifer was seated on his throne to see them arrive, and as they came in, every one of them threw at his feet what he had been able to take that day.

This brought a priest, that a robber, the one champions killed in single combat, others bishops, abbots, and monks, all caught napping when they least expected it. The sable monarch stopped his captives awhile to examine them, and on a signal immediately caused them to be thrown into his cauldron. The time being over, he ordered the gates to be shut, and asked if all the devils had returned. "Yes," answered some one, "except a poor idiot, very simple and inexperienced, who went out above a month ago, and whom we must not probably expect this day, because he will be ashamed of returning empty-handed."

The joker had scarcely finished speaking, when in came the young devil loaded with his tattered minstrel, whom he humbly presented to his sovereign. "Come hither," said Lucifer to the singer, "what are you, robber, spy, or ribald?"—"No, sire, I was a minstrel, and you see in me one who possessed all the science that any man on earth could have, notwithstanding which I experienced above a

great many difficulties and much misery, but since you have taken upon yourself the trouble of lodging me, I will sing, if that will amuse you." "Yes, by the Pope's toe, songs! That to be sure is the kind of music I want. Here, hark ye, you see that cauldron, and you are already naked; I employ you to heat it, and above all to take care there is always a good fire."—"Most willingly, sire; at least I shall be certain for the future not to suffer from cold." Our hero immediately took possession of his office, and during some time acquitted himself of his commission punctually.

But one day Lucifer, having convoked all his assistants to go with him on earth on a general sweep, before he set out, called for the stoker. "I am going abroad," says he, "and I leave under your guard all my prisoners, but remember, you shall be answerable for them with the eyes of your head, and that if at my return a single one is wanting"—"Sire, go in peace, I will be answerable for them; you shall find things in order at your return, and you shall rely on my fidelity."—"Once more take special care; your everything depends on it. I will have you eaten up alive." These precautions taken, the infernal army set off.

This was the moment Saint Peter waited for; he had heard this discourse above in heaven, and kept himself on the watch to profit by it; as soon as the demons were out, he disguised himself, took a long black beard, with well-twisted moustaches,

descended into hell, and accosting the minstrel, said, "Friend, shall we two make a party? Here is a box and dice, and some good money to be won." At the same time he showed a long and large purse full of esterlings. "Sire," replied the other, "it is in vain that you come here to tempt me, for I swear to you, by God, I possess nothing in the world but this torn shirt that you see."—"Well, if you have no money, stake in its room a few souls; I will be contented with that money, and you need not fear wanting them in a hurry."—"No, faith, I'll not do that, I too well remember what my master told me at parting; find me some other expedient, for as to that I am your humble servant."—"Blockhead, how do you suppose he is to know it, and in such a multitude; tell me, what will be five or six souls more or less? Take hold, look, see those pretty pieces quite new, it only depends on you to make some of them pass into your pocket; make use of the opportunity whilst I am here, for, if I once go out, I shall not return. Come, I'll stake twenty pence, bring hither some soul!" The unhappy fiddler devoured the dice with his eyes, he took them up, put them down, and then took them up again. At length he could hold out no longer, and consented to take a few throws, though but for one soul at a time, for fear of exposing himself to too great a loss. "Done, for one," replies the apostle, "fair or brown, male or female, I care little which, I leave the choice to you; play away." One went then to fetch some of the damned,

the other spreads abroad his esterlings. They sat down by the side of the furnace, and began their game. But the saint played a sure one, and therefore constantly won. It was to no purpose that the singer, to recover his losings, doubled and tripled his stakes : he always lost.

Not being able to account for this continual run of ill-luck, he suspected treachery in his adversary, grew angry and swore he would not pay, and called the apostle a sharper and knave ; the apostle gave him the lie ; they took each other by the hair and boxed ; luckily the saint proved the stronger, and the other, after having been well drubbed, found himself obliged to beg pardon. He proposed then to begin the game anew, if the former losses might go for nothing, promising besides to pay very faithfully, and even to let him choose where he would out of the cauldron, thieves, monks, wenches, knights, priests, or countrymen, canons or canonesses, Peter had at his tongue's end the word knave, and reproached him more than once ; but he asked so many pardons, that the saint suffered himself to be prevailed on, and returned to play.

The minstrel in this game was no more successful than in the former ; and I have told you the reason ; he grew warm, staked a hundred souls, a thousand souls, at a time, changed the dice, changed his place, and nevertheless lost every throw. At length in despair he arose and quitted the game, cursed the saint, the dice-box, and his bad luck, which

followed him even to hell. Peter then approached the cauldron to choose and draw forth the souls he had won ; each of them implored his pity to be one of the happy. There were such cries that no one could be heard : the minstrel in fury ran up, and like a man that would risk everything, he proposed to play for all the souls that remained. The apostle desired nothing better ; this important last stake was decided on the spot, and I have no need to tell you what were the pangs and feelings of the patients who were witnesses. Their lot happily fell into the hands of the man of miracles ; he won once more, and set off in a hurry with them for Paradise.

A few hours after, entered Lucifer with his company, but what was his pain when he saw his fires out, his cauldron empty, and not a single soul of the thousands he had left. He called the stoker, " Rascal, what have you done with my prisoners ? " — " Ah ! sire, I throw myself at your feet ; have pity on me, and I will tell you all. " He then recounted his adventure, owning that he was not more fortunate in hell than he had been on earth. " Who is the blockhead that brought us this gambler ? " said the irritated prince ; " let them give him a good basting with the stirrup leathers. " Immediately they seized the little devilling who had made so bad a present, and trimmed him so heartily, that he promised faithfully never to take charge of or meddle with a minstrel. " Drive hence this dealer in crotchets, " added the monarch ; " God may receive him in his

Paradise, he who loves joy ; for my part, I will never more hear minstrels mentioned."

The singer asked nothing more, pushed off nimbly, and ran to Paradise, where St Peter received him with open arms, and took him in with the others.

Minstrels and jugglers, you may henceforward rejoice : there is no hell for you : he who played against St Peter has shut the gates !

THE COUNTRYMAN WHO GOT INTO HEAVEN BY HIS PLEADING.

A COUNTRYMAN died. And (what perhaps never happened to any man but him) no one either in heaven or hell was informed of it ! You will say, "How came that about?" I can't tell : I only know this—that by a singular chance, there were neither angels nor devils ready to claim his soul at the moment it parted from his body. Alone, then, and trembling all over, the countryman set off without his guide, and immediately, since no one opposed it, made the best of his way towards heaven. Nevertheless, as he did not well know the road, he feared he should lose himself ; but luckily having perceived the archangel Michael, who was conducting one of the elect thither, he followed him at a distance without speaking a word, and got so close to him, that both arrived at the same moment at the gates of heaven.

St Peter, as soon as he heard a knocking, opened the wicket to the archangel and his companion ; but when he saw the clown all alone, " Begone, begone,"

said he to him, "people don't enter here without a conductor ; besides, we don't want villains here."—"Villain yourself !" replied the peasant ; "truly it mightily becomes you, who thrice denied our Lord, to endeavour to turn out honest people from a place where you ought not to be, and where they perhaps have a good right to come. Truly this is pretty behaviour for an apostle ! To be sure God did himself great honour in trusting you with the keys of his Paradise !"

Peter, little accustomed to such discourse, was so confounded with this, that he retired without being able to answer. He met St Thomas, to whom he simply recounted the affront he had just suffered. "Leave me alone," said St Thomas, "I'll go and find the booby, and well know how to make him sneak off." Away he went to the place, and gave it the countryman roundly, asking him with what face he dared present himself at the dwelling of the elect, where none ever entered but martyrs and confessors. "Ay !" replied the countryman, "and pray, then, how got you here?—you who wanted faith—you who would not believe the resurrection, which was duly announced to you, unless you might poke your fingers into the wounds of your master. Since miscreants can get in here, surely I may enter, I who have always believed like one of the truly faithful."

Thomas hung down his head at this reproach, and, without waiting for any more, retired, heartily ashamed, to find Peter.

St Paul, coming up by chance, and hearing their complaints, laughed at them both. "You don't know how to talk," said he to them, and swearing by his chief that he would go and revenge them, and rid them of the countryman, he advanced with a haughty air, and took him by the arm to turn him out. "These airs don't at all surprise me," said the countryman; "persecutor or spy on the Christians, you have always been a tyrant: to change you it was necessary for God to make use of all his powers for working miracles, and after all he has not cured you of being a fire-brand, nor hindered you from quarrelling with Peter, although he was your superior. Go in, old bald-pate; and although I am no relation of that good St Stephen, nor of any of those honest people whom you so villainously caused to be massacred, understand that I know you well."

In spite of all the assurance he had promised, Paul was disconcerted; he turned to the two apostles who, seeing him as much displeased as themselves, agreed to go and complain to God.

Peter, as the chief, was spokesman. He demanded justice, and concluded by saying, that the insolence of the clown had so confounded him, that he should be ashamed to return any more to his

post, if he thought he should again find him there. "Well," said God, "I will go and speak to him myself:" and he went with them immediately to the door, and calling the clown who was still waiting, asked him how he came there without a conductor, and how he had the assurance to stay there after having insulted his apostles. "Sire, they wanted to turn me out, and I thought I had a right to enter as well as they, for I have neither denied you, I never wanted faith towards your holy word, and never caused any one to be imprisoned or stoned. People are not received here without judgment; I know it well and submit myself to it. Good Lord, judge me. You caused me to be born in poverty, and I supported my misery without murmuring, and worked hard all my life. They bade me believe your gospel—I believed it. They' preached to me I know not how many things—I did them. In short, those days you gave me I endeavoured to spend well, and have nothing to reproach myself with. If any poor people came to me, I lodged them; I made them sit by the corner of my fire, and shared with them the bread earned by the sweat of my brow. You know, Lord, I do not lie to you in the least matter. When I found myself sick, I confessed and received the sacraments. Our pastor always assured us that Paradise should be given to him who lived and died thus, in consequence of which I come to ask it. Besides, you yourself made me enter here in calling

me to answer you ; here I am, and here I'll stay, for you have said in your gospel, you remember it, *He is come in, leave him there*, and you are incapable of breaking your word."—"You have gained it by your pleading," said God ; "stay here, since you are so good a reasoner." See what it was to have been at a good school !

1

THE KNIGHT AND THE SWORD.

AN HEROIC TALE.

KING ARTHUR held his residence at Carduel with the queen his consort, Gauvain his nephew, and a select body of knights. The spring was advancing, and the weather delightfully serene. Gauvain, wishing to take advantage of it, called for his horse, and having put on his golden spurs, without any other arms beside his sword, his lance, and shield, he took the road towards the forest. The beauty of the sky, the melody of the birds, and the fragrance of the growing verdure, lulled him insensibly into an agreeable reverie: he indulged in it for some time; and on recollecting himself perceived that he had wandered out of the beaten track. The imminence of the night, threatening him with the prospect of a hard bed in the wood, was not very agreeable. He then tried to retrace his steps, but after pursuing various courses, to the right and to the left, he only got astray the further.

Gauvain was in this dilemma, when he descried

through the thicket, at a distance, the light of a large fire. On his approach to it, he perceived a horse fastened to a tree, and near the fire a knight seated. Gauvain instantly went up and addressed him, desiring to be directed into the road to Carduel. The strange knight offered himself to lead the way to the castle as soon as the day would permit, and in the meanwhile begged the favour of the other's company. Gauvain then dismounted, and wrapping himself up in his mantle, sat down by the stranger and entered into conversation with him. Being naturally of an easy and open temper, he assumed in their discourse his usual frankness; his companion, on the other hand, was far more reserved. At length, after having conversed for some time, sleep overpowered their faculties, and they slumbered till the daylight appeared to rouse them. "We are at a considerable distance from Carduel," then observed the strange knight; "and I imagine you have not had your supper; my castle is not far distant; come along with me, and accept without ceremony a repast that shall be provided for you with alacrity." Gauvain assented without hesitation to this proposal, and they accordingly pursued their journey. But scarcely had they got clear of the forest, when the stranger asked leave to push on before his fellow-traveller. "I have nobody," said he, "to announce your coming; permit me to leave you for a few moments, that I may discharge that office. You see

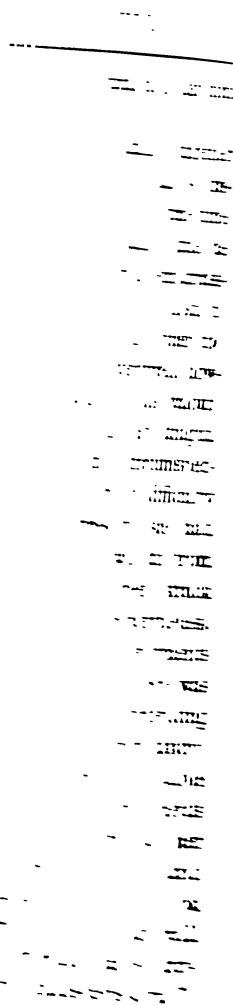
my residence on the brow of yonder hill ; it is there I shall expect your arrival." Having said this, he set out on full speed ; and Gauvain, who did not in the least suspect his courtesy, followed him at a moderate pace.

A little farther he fell in with four shepherds whom he saluted. These men, from the martial air and noble appearance of our hero, were strongly prepossessed in his favour ; and one of them exclaimed, "Gallant knight, you deserve a better fate than what you are going to encounter !" The prince at first bestowed no attention on these words, and rode on ; but he stopped soon after on reflection, and turned about to ask the shepherds an explanation of their untoward greeting. They answered him plainly, that if they felt any regret on his account, it was because they had seen so many brave knights go like him to the neighbouring castle, not one of whom was ever known to return. Gauvain, therefore, asked them several questions, which they could not solve with certainty ; for as no one had been able to tell what happened to him, all they could build upon was common rumour and surmise. They could only acquaint him that, according to those vague reports, the mysterious knight would not suffer the least contradiction ; that his custom was to put to the severest trial such as came to his castle, and that, on the most minute resistance on their part, they were immediately dispatched.

This information, given with all the appearance of truth, was sufficient to inspire dismay; and Gauvain for some moments hesitated whether he should proceed or go back. But the consideration of the little reliance that ought to be placed on such suggestions, perhaps thrown out maliciously to try his courage, the apprehension above all of being hereafter reproached with the breach of his promise, and of yielding for once in his life to the influence of fear, rendered him insensible to danger, and resolute on going through with the adventure.

He was expected at the castle. No sooner did he appear, than the lord himself and his whole family came out to meet him with all the marks of satisfaction and good will. They took his horse, disarmed him, and ushered him into an apartment richly decorated, where the knight desired him to sit down, till the repast was served up. "My good sir," said he, "act here as if you were at home; if anything is displeasing to you, declare it with the same freedom as in your own house; for I would have you consider yourself as the master of everything you see." Gauvain, not having forgotten what the shepherds hinted to him, declared himself entirely satisfied. A few moments after, the knight brought into the room a young lady of the most dazzling beauty. This was his daughter. He ordered her to be subservient in every particular to the will of Gauvain, and, that

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The knight again entered the room to conduct his guest to table. "When I have a friend to entertain," said he, as he sat down, "I am greatly displeased unless he orders what he has an inclination for, finds fault with what he dislikes, and, in short, conducts himself in every respect as if he were at his own table." After this declaration, he offers a part of everything to Gauvain, makes him drink copiously, and desires his opinion of each dish. The guest eats and drinks without saying much, and of course finds everything excellent in its kind. The knight even goes so far as to offer him his daughter; to which he makes not the least objection, but thankfully accepts the offer.

After the repast, the owner of the castle, being disposed to go to the woods, according to custom, in search of adventures, ordered a horse to be saddled; and before his departure commanded his guest, on pain of death, not to leave the castle without permission, but to remain there till his return. He, however, left his daughter with the prince to amuse him; for his pleasure and entertainment were to be above all consulted. Gauvain in astonishment knew not what to think of this incredible mixture of civility and harshness, of politeness and brutality. Nevertheless, from the honesty of his own disposition he derived arguments to excuse the knight's whimsical conduct, and could not be induced to believe that his spontaneous ir- died caresses could lead

to any preconcerted mischief. The damsel, whose regard for him had already given her some alarm, began to entertain still more serious apprehensions. She wished to penetrate into the mysterious artifices that were on foot against her lover, in order to put him upon his guard. But all she could do was to caution him again to acquiesce cheerfully in all that should be required of him.

At supper he was assailed with the same importunity as in the morning. But the events of the evening led to still greater astonishment, when the father, at rising from table, ordered a bed to be got ready for him in the hall, and resigned his own to the stranger and his daughter. Gauvain, at this declaration, was extremely puzzled; he was afraid of being killed if he objected, and thought himself in no less danger if he assented: he had not therefore resolution to reply. Without waiting for his answer, they conducted him to the chamber with the damsel. Twelve wax candles were lighted, and that he might all night feast his eyes upon her charms, he was expressly ordered not to extinguish them. They afterwards locked the door of the room, and carried off the key. The lady then lay down, and Gauvain placed himself beside her.

Whatever dangers he had been previously warned of, they could not remain before his eyes in that situation. He was thrown off his guard, and had very near forgotten himself, when the lady told him she was there not unprotected. This

declaration surprised him ; he threw his eyes around the room, and could perceive nothing, till he was directed to observe a sword suspended near the window. "That sword," said the lady, "is enchanted ; it watches over and guards me ; and it is the last danger my father has reserved for those who have been so fortunate as to escape the others. The instant of any indiscretion, it leaves the scabbard and comes to pierce the guilty person. Of more than twenty knights who, like you, have lain in this bed, not one has left it alive. Do not, my dear friend, I entreat you, expose yourself to the same fate, nor bring upon me an affliction that could terminate only with my life."

These words increased still more the perplexity of Gauvain. Never had he heard of such an incident. The whole affair, indeed, appeared to him so extraordinary that he could scarcely believe it real ; he even was tempted to suspect the story to be merely an artifice of modesty, reduced to its last shift. He was proceeding to make the experiment, when the damsel gave a sudden cry, and the sword, darting like a thunderbolt, wounded the prince, and then returned to its former situation. He was seized with consternation ; while his companion reproached him tenderly, for rashly exposing himself to the danger ; at the same time she congratulated him on having only incurred a slight wound, and urged him to follow her example by composing himself to sleep.

But the wax lights still burned, and gazing was not prohibited by the enchanted sword. That tantalising light was the torment of Gauvain. He soon was transported by contemplation of such charms, and could restrain himself no longer. What would King Arthur and his courtiers say of a knight to whom so charming an opportunity was presented, and whom the fear of danger withheld from seizing it? What would they think of the incredible tale of a sword, wielded by no arm, conducted by nobody? What raillery, what satire would it not create? He formed his resolution rather to suffer death than be deterred. As he moved towards the damsel, the sword clove its passage through the air, and again drew blood from him.

After this second lesson, it may be imagined that the prince no longer found fault with the lustre of the wax lights; and that during the remainder of the night, how long soever it might appear to him, the railleries of Arthur's courtiers were but a secondary consideration with him.

The father had been no less watchful, but from a different cause. He was impatient to know the success of his temptation, and waited eagerly for the arrival of the morn to announce it to him. But what was his surprise to find the stranger living! "By my honour," said Gauvain, "I have done nothing to merit death." His bed clothes, however, pierced through and bloody, betrayed him;

and, notwithstanding the discretion he boasted, he was obliged to avow the truth. He was asked his name, that name so illustrious and celebrated already for so many brilliant exploits. The knight, when informed of it, seemed to be impressed with veneration, and confessed in his turn that, in spite of him, the enchantment of the sword was finished. "It was its duty," said he, "to spare the best and most gallant of knights: you were the destined husband for my daughter; to unravel the decree of fate has cost the lives of many brave men. But since the discovery is at last effected, accept her hand, together with my domain and castle."

Gauvain thanked the knight, but declared himself more than satisfied with the damsel. It was soon circulated through the neighbourhood that within the castle was a knight, by whom the fatal sword had been eluded. Congratulations arrived from all parts, and his triumph was celebrated that very day with feasting and diversions. After the feast, minstrels were brought into the hall, which resounded with the notes of violins, pipes, and flutes; songs were sung by others, accompanied by the harp and cymbals. Romances were read and stories told, while the guests played at chess, at hazard, and other games. The amusements were thus prolonged till evening, when all retired to rest. As for the two lovers, they were conducted in form to that very room in which

they had passed the preceding night; and on this occasion, as the one had no enchanted sword to dread, so the other had no pretence for resistance.

THE SCARLET ROBE.

A KNIGHT of the county of Dammartin, a man of repute in his neighbourhood, had chosen for his mistress a very agreeable and pretty woman, married to a rich lord of a district about two leagues distant. Anxious to acquire the esteem and affections of the lady, our knight omitted no opportunity of courting honour and gaining fresh laurels; indeed, throughout the whole country there was not to be found a more valiant cavalier. The lord, on the contrary, was fond of the bench, and was never happy but when haranguing in court or giving judgment in a law-suit.

One day in July, he was obliged to go and attend the pleadings at Senlis. The lady immediately sent a private message to her lover, acquainting him with the departure of her husband, and appointing an assignation at home that night. The knight, whose love was no less respectful than ardent, and who knew the decorum proper to be observed in such a meeting, put on his best gilt spurs, his fine scarlet cloak; and dressed like a young bachelor, the terror of lovers, he set out on

his high palfrey, taking with him a sparrow-hawk and a couple of dogs, that he might be provided for sport, in case he should fall in with anybody upon the road. All the people were asleep at the castle when he arrived. He therefore fastened up his horse, placed a perching-stick for his bird, and went quietly to the lady's chamber. At break of day the husband returned. The pleadings were put off to the following week at Senlis, and he came home to go to bed. But how was he astonished on entering the court to see a horse, dogs, and a hawk! He suspected there was somebody with his wife, and ran up hastily to know the truth of it. The knight was lucky enough to hear him coming; and, snatching such of his clothes as he could lay his hands upon, crept down to the farther side of the bed, and lay upon the floor at full length. The wife, to conceal him, threw over him her cloak and petticoat; but he had been in so great a hurry to hide himself, that he had not time to find his robe: it lay upon a trunk near the bed, and was the first object that met the eyes of the husband.

"Madam," he exclaimed, sternly, "what is the meaning of all this? I just saw below a horse and dogs; and here is a robe; who is it has been here in my absence?" "Sir," said she, without being in the smallest degree disconcerted, "it is a present that has been just made you. But, have you not seen my brother? I am surprised you did not see him; for he has but this moment gone. He

came yesterday in this fine robe. I, in perfect simplicity and without any design whatever, just happened to remark in conversation, that it would become you. 'I wished your husband to try it,' answered he, immediately; and pulling it off, begged I would present it to you: at the same time, to make his gift worth your acceptance, he insisted upon adding to it his gilt spurs, his dogs, his hawk, and his favourite horse. You may easily conceive the answer I made to so generous an offer: but it was in vain that I declined it again and again; he would listen to no refusal, but has left them all, as you see, behind him. Receive then the donation, since you cannot send it away without offending him. You may without difficulty soon find something to present him with in return, that will acquit you of the obligation."

This fiction succeeded to a wonder. The husband, somewhat avaricious in his disposition, was delighted with the present. But he was almost ashamed to take the robe, and wished it had been omitted in the gift; he was apprehensive of being charged with want of delicacy. "Not at all, sir," answered the lady; "your acceptance of it will be attributed to frankness and good nature. Nothing should be rejected from a friend; for my own part, whenever I observe any one shy of receiving, I immediately set him down for one who is equally averse from giving." By these and other like arguments she brought him to acknowledge her in the right,

and to promise that he would keep the whole. At last he lay down ; and it is more difficult to say than to conceive how cordially he was received, how he was caressed, and what pains were taken to lull him to sleep. But no sooner did he begin to snore, than the wife pushed the gallant gently with her foot to give him notice of it. He then stole softly for his robe, and going away mounted his horse and returned home with his dogs and his bird.

Towards noon, the husband awoke, and the first thing he thought of was to inquire for his fine robe. His valet, who the day before had been in the fields to superintend the reapers, knew not what he asked for, and brought him a green one which he used to wear. "No, no ; it is not that I want ; it is the fine scarlet robe that was given to me yesterday." His wife, looking upon him with an air of astonishment, asked him if he had bought or borrowed one at Senlis. "No, madam, I tell you again, it is that your brother gave me. But you ought to know better than I ; for this morning on my arrival, when I found it on this trunk, you said it was a present that he had made me."—"My brother, sir ! it is more than four months since I saw him. You have certainly been dreaming ; for even if he had been here, as you insinuate, he would not have behaved like a man drunk or mad in offering you his robe. He might act in that manner towards minstrels or fiddlers, or any of those strol-

ling men who go about singing to entertain us. Your estate brings you more than eighty thousand livres a-year; surely that is enough to satisfy all your wishes. Buy yourself a horse as handsome and valuable as you please; treat yourself with clothes to your fancy; you can well afford it; but pray do not wish to wear those of other people.”—“How now! but this very morning it was through your persuasion I agreed to accept it. If I were to believe you, I could not refuse it without offending your brother, and giving him uneasiness. Now, I disgrace myself. Which am I to believe?”—“Who, I, sir? I talk to you in that manner? That I should pretend that my brother spoke to me, when I had not seen him! Indeed, if I did not know that you had been sleeping, this language would give me a vast deal of pain. I should be apprehensive that your brain was affected. But I suspect you are not in earnest. Come, tell me truly, do you really believe you saw a robe on this trunk?”—“Yes, most undoubtedly; it was there; I saw it as plainly as I see you at this moment.”—“Ah! my dear husband, you alarm me. I’ll engage some accident happened to you on the road, that you do not think proper to inform me of. Look at me; ha! yes, indeed; it is as I apprehended; your eyes are jaundiced, you have symptoms of a fever. You are certainly not in sound health. Take my advice; lie down again; and since it has pleased God that your memory should be affected, com

mend yourself to our Lady, or to some good saint in heaven, that it may be restored to you. Make a vow to go and visit the church of St James; you may return by that of St Arnaud. Sometime since, if you had been ruled by me, you would have promised this last a large wax candle, as big round as your body."——

Although these exhortations had some effect on the mind of the husband, yet he could not divest himself of the idea that he had seen a robe on the trunk; and he sent for all his servants to interrogate them on the subject. But not one of them, as I before stated, had seen the knight; and even if they had been privy to the whole affair, they would have been careful how they ventured to contradict their mistress. The husband then was induced, upon the whole, to think his senses were disturbed; and, seemingly alarmed at what had happened, he vowed a pilgrimage to St James's shrine, upon which he set out three days after.

Gentlemen, husbands! this story is intended for your admonition. I warn you not to trust the evidence of your own senses; but if you mean to do well, and to pass quietly through life, you must believe only what your wives tell you.

THE BUTCHER OF ABBEVILLE.

MILES, a butcher of Abbeville, being benighted on his return from the market of Oisemont, and obliged to stop in the road at Bailleul, inquired of an old woman whom he met, whether there was in the village any inn or house in which he could be accommodated with a night's lodging. "There is one," answered the good woman, "but it will afford you indifferent fare. I would rather advise you to apply to Sir Gautier, our parson. He is the only one in the village that keeps good wine ; and to my knowledge he has lately received two casks from Noyentel."

Miles followed the advice of the old woman, and went to knock at the door of the pastor. This last was a man of an austere and brutal temper. Without opening the door, or so much as putting his head out of the window, he called from the further extremity of the room to know what our traveller wanted. The butcher told him he was a poor man, who had been travelling on foot all day, and, being afraid of robbers, wanted to beg shelter for the night. The priest made him a short an-

swer, that his house was not intended for the reception of clodhoppers. Surprised to hear such language from a divine, the butcher expostulated; he represented that he was a man, no less than the noblest knight in France, and moreover offered to pay any reasonable price for his lodging. All the reply he could get was, to go to the devil.

As he went away, fully resolved to be revenged on the parson, if ever he could find an opportunity, he perceived a flock of sheep approaching him, and inquired to whom they belonged. "Sir," said the shepherd, "they are the property of Parson Gautier." Miles, overjoyed at this discovery, went and placed himself behind a hedge; and as the sheep were filing off, one after another, he singled out the finest and best conditioned, and clandestinely carried it off. A few minutes after, he went again and knocked at the parson's door. Being asked his business, and who he was, he answered that he was a butcher from Abbeville, and was bringing a fat sheep from the market of Oisemont, which he would gladly give for a supper. This obtained him a very hearty welcome. He then made the parson observe the fine condition of the animal, and declared that, for his part, he would be satisfied with the skin. After going himself and cutting it up in the kitchen, he returned, while the servant was dressing part of it, to converse with the parson.

His reverence kept a mistress, whom he always

shut up in her chamber on the appearance of a stranger ; and this was one reason for refusing at first to open the door to the butcher. But the present of the mutton put him in such good humour, that he desired the girl to come down and partake of the supper. The evening was spent in great mirth and festivity. On breaking up from table, Gautier went up stairs with the lady, and desired the maid servant to show Miles into the room that was intended for him, and to observe that he wanted nothing. Miles, however, settled matters with the maid so as not to be obliged to lie alone ; what engaged her to be so complaisant was a promise of the sheep's skin.

The next morning, whilst the pastor was gone to say mass, the butcher went up to the lady's chamber, on pretence of taking leave and thanking her for her civilities. She had not yet risen out of bed. Miles, drawing aside the clothes a little, expressed his rapture at her charms, again made an offer of the sheep's skin, and got for the same promise the favour he had before obtained from the maid-servant. After this he repaired to the church to find Gautier, and made a proposal to him of selling the skin, which he said would incommode him on his journey, for a third less than it was worth. The bargain was instantly struck ; Gautier gave him the price in ready money, and begged to be favoured with another visit, the next time he should pass through Bailleul.

Meanwhile the parson's mistress had no sooner acquired her right to the sheep's skin, than she went down stairs to take possession. The maid, whose pretensions were the same, also laid claim to it; and this gave rise to a desperate quarrel, which began with mutual abuse, and terminated in blows and pulling caps. Gautier, coming in, was obliged to interpose and to separate the combatants. He inquired into the cause of their dispute, and then beginning to have some insight into what had happened, he threatened to turn them both out of doors.

Just at that moment came the shepherd with a bewildered look, to tell his master that one of the sheep was missing, without it being possible for him to account for the loss, unless it was stolen by a fellow who accosted him the night before, as he was driving the flock into fold. Gautier desired him to describe the man, and found it was no other than his butcher. He then produced the hide of the sheep, which the shepherd perfectly recollected. The whole affair was then cleared up; and it was found that Miles, after having been lodged and feasted by the parson, and after having amused himself with the two girls, was not content, but had even contrived to get payment for his trouble.

THE PARSON'S COW.

A COUNTRYMAN, on the day of the Annunciation, went with his wife to church. The parson, who was called Master Constant, before he began divine service addressed a homily to his parishioners, in which he vehemently exhorted them to charity ; among other arguments in favour of giving for the sake of God, stating the return that would be made ; “ for God,” said he, “ always repays two-fold.”

This reasoning had its effect upon the countryman. “ Wife,” said he, on leaving the church, “ did you attend to what our priest has just been saying ? Since God pays with such good interest, I have a mind to give away our cow for his sake. Besides, she does not afford us much milk. What think you ? ” — “ You will do well,” answered the wife, “ if it be to get something more in return.”

The villager, in consequence of this determination, went to loosen his cow, and conducted her to the parson, whom he entreated with uplifted hands to accept the gift. “ It is the only one I have,” said he ; “ I offer it to you in the name of

God." At the same time he put into the priest's hand the halter of the beast. Constant applauded vastly this conduct of his parishioner, and heartily wished that his discourse had operated as happily on the rest.

When the countryman was gone, the parson ordered his clerk to take the cow he had just gotten to the stable, and to tie its horns with those of his own, that they might be used to each other. The clerk obeyed the order, and then returned. The parson's cow continued feeding very peaceably; but the other, frightened at her associate or not liking the situation she was in, began to draw aside, and to endeavour to get away. By repeated tugs she at last drew her companion out of the cow-house; and thence from meadow to meadow, and from field to field, till she dragged her to the door of her own stable. The countryman, who saw them arrive together, called out his wife to be a witness of the miracle. They then congratulated themselves on having given their cow to God, and agreed that the parson was right in saying that he repaid two-fold. Nevertheless, their stable being too small to contain both the beasts, they resolved without delay to get rid of the new comer, and the countryman instantly led her to market.

THE WOMAN THAT ENSNARED A PRIEST A PROVOST, AND A RANGER.

ISABEL, the young and handsome wife of an industrious, hard-working man, named Constant du Hamel, had at one time in the train of her admirers the parson of the parish, the provost, and the ranger of the forest. They all three made their addresses, offering for her favour, the first twenty livres, the second ten, and the last a gold ring. To all their solicitations the prudent wife answered that her husband maintained her by his labour, that in return she contributed to his happiness, and that she should esteem herself the most contemptible of beings if she were to repay his goodness with infidelity.

One day our three lovers met to take a glass of wine together. Soon being warmed by the liquor, they began to talk of what was uppermost in their thoughts, that was, dame Isabel. One declared that he would readily fast forty days, to break it at the expiration of that time with so dainty a morsel ; another that, to pass a night with her, he would submit to die the next morning. The parson, being

more enterprising, exclaimed against their want of spirit, and asserted that if they would only come to a good understanding together, they might all three have this fine woman at a much easier rate. "All that is necessary to be done," said he, "is to ruin the clown her husband, and either to get him locked up, or oblige him to fly the country. When she finds herself in distress, she must come to us in her turn, and humbly accept what she now rejects with so much haughtiness." This wicked project was adopted, and the three agreed on the part each should take in it. On the Sunday following, the pastor mounted the pulpit, and seeing Constant in the church, he denounced before the parishioners his excommunication, as one who had infringed the holy canons by marrying his near kinswoman. In consequence he ordered them to turn him out of the church, otherwise the divine service would be suspended. The villager hereupon retired in consternation. He went to the parson's house, waited there till the priest returned home, and conjured him with uplifted hands to have compassion on him, and to procure his absolution of the archbishop. He even offered to pay for the favour beforehand, and proposed eight livres. The other accepted his offer, the more readily, as by that means he hoped to make the boor pay for the civilities he expected from the wife.

Constant returned home in tears. Isabel, em-

bracing him affectionately, asked him the cause of his sorrow. She soon saw without difficulty into the motive of the persecution, and comforted him with the assurance that she would find means to put a stop to it that night. They sat down to table; but scarcely had they commenced their meal, before a messenger arrived to summons Constant before the provost.

This messenger accused him of having in the night broken into the lord's barn and stolen his corn, and for this pretended offence he ordered him to be imprisoned, and threatened that the next day the gallows should be prepared for him. The unhappy man in vain protested that in the course of his life he had never robbed any one, and that he would rather die than steal a grain. His protestations were treated as mere falsehood, and suborned evidence was set up to prove that the traces of the corn were found from the barn to his house. At last, seeing that he was to expect nothing less than condemnation to die, he judged it most advisable to compound for mercy, and offered the provost twenty livres, which he accepted.

On his way home he perceived his servant running towards him; this man came with the news that the ranger had seized his two oxen "on account," as he says, "of your having last week cut down several trees in the forest." Constant then throws down his hood, and runs after the ranger. But this affair turned out like the others, the poor

devil could not get back his oxen without engaging to pay a hundred pence for their ransom.

He returned home to lament his misfortunes, but his wife made light of these persecutions, and promised Constant to give him shortly ample vengeance on his three enemies, and to afford him as much diversion at their cost as he had already experienced chagrin.

The next morning, after having concealed her husband, Isabel called Galotrot her maid-servant, and ordered her to warm some water for a bath. While the water was warming she acquainted the girl with all the particulars of her correspondence with the three gallants, as well as with her design of punishing them, and then sent her to the parson. "You must tell him in confidence," said she, "that Constant is obliged to pay twenty livres to-day, and is not in possession of a sou ; and that if he will come and bring me the sum he last offered me, he need not fear meeting with a good reception."

Galotrot was a clumsy, country wench, of a heavy, stupid appearance, but with a great deal of cunning and archness at the bottom. She performed her part at the parson's so dexterously, that he in his transport embraced her and gave her twenty pence to buy a petticoat. He then went to his strong box for the sum required, and, putting on a scarlet mantle trimmed with white fur, he hastened with his offering. The dame received him with great

good humour, and chatted with him for a little while. She then proposed, before she discharged the obligation, that they should bathe together. He agreed to it cordially, but no sooner was he in the bath than she carried off his clothes and put them under lock and key, after which she despatched her maid-servant to the provost.

"You have no claim to any further regard from me," said Galotrot, when she arrived at the provost's, "since you seem to have forgotten me. See what it is to be rich ; one becomes too proud to salute one's own relations. But, for my part, I have no malice in my nature, and am inclined to return good for evil. There's my mistress in the greatest distress at home. She is in want of money. Go, and take advantage of the opportunity, but for your life don't say that I sent you."

The provost made a thousand apologies to his fat cousin for the neglect of which she complained ; he paid her a great many compliments, and, what was better, gave her twenty pence as well as the parson ; then supplying himself with money, he went with her and knocked at Isabel's door. "Heavens ! it is my husband," cried the wife. At this intelligence the parson leaped out of the bath, and (being naked) laboured under the most dreadful apprehensions from a discovery. Not knowing where to hide himself, "Go," said she, "into the next room, and conceal yourself in that great barrel, where you will find plenty of feathers. I'll

cover you with this winnowing fan ; Constant will never think of looking for you there."

Isabel had no sooner caged her first lover than she went to open the door for the second. She likewise proposed bathing to him, secured his clothes in the same manner, and then sent Galotrot to the ranger.

" My mistress gave you but an indifferent reception yesterday," says Galotrot to the forester. " I have given her a smart lesson for it, and have brought her to acknowledge that your ring would suit her finger admirably. After that you know best what to do. All I wanted was to afford you a proof of my good will, and must return home immediately."

The gallant, delighted with the information, gave Galotrot tenpence, and posted with his ring to Isabel. She, being pressed by the provost to come into the bath, began to undress herself, but to gain time did it as slowly as possible. At the noise made by the ranger at the door, she seemed terrified, and cried out as before, " It is my husband ! I am undone ! " The provost knew not where to run, till she directed him likewise to the large cask. He jumps in feet-foremost, and comes with violence upon the parson, who had crept under the feathers to conceal himself. The latter cries out with pain. This leads them to a discovery of each other ; they find that they are caught in the same trap ; but it was then too late, they could not get out, but were under the necessity of waiting the issue.

Very soon the same manœuvre was played upon the ranger, who joined the other two in the cask ; for Constant, to frighten him, called out from his hiding place, and came forward with an axe in his hand. Isabel then, to be completely revenged, proposed to her husband to send for the wives of the three prisoners, one after another, and on the very spot to confer on them the honours they had intended for him.

Galotrot was again employed as the messenger. First arrived the parson's wife. Isabel, through civility, offers her the bath ; the woman undresses, but as she is going to enter the tub Constant appears, and quickly makes her expiate her husband's offence. The provost and the ranger who, from their hiding-place are spectators of the scene, rally the priest on it. Soon after their wives come, when the laugh is turned against them, and the parson banters them in the same manner.

But the prisoners are not let off with this. Constant, coming up to the cask with his hatchet in one hand and a candle in the other, inquires who threw such a quantity of feathers and rubbish there, and immediately sets it on fire. This makes the gentry within think in earnest of their escape. They spring up and run out of the house, whilst he pursues them with a large stick, and sets his dogs loose after them. From all parts the cry is raised, and chase given to those naked feathered monsters. All the bells are set ringing. Men, women, and

children join in the pursuit, all striving to get up with them, and each eager to strike his blow. At last they take refuge in a house where they are obliged to declare who they are, and to sue for mercy. Thus Constant by the adventure got trinkets, money, and amusement.

THE QUEEN THAT KILLED HER SENESCHAL.

IN Egypt there lived formerly a king, young, handsome, and free from every kind of vice. He was principally attached to the chase ; his dogs, birds, and horses were the great sources of his amusement. One day, as he was stag-hunting, a dreadful tempest arising suddenly separated him from his companions in the pursuit. Fear and confusion had scattered them so completely that not a single equerry or huntsman remained with the king. The royal sportsman placed himself under a large tree for shelter till the rain abated, and then proceeded, as chance directed him, every minute stopping to listen for the sound of the dogs or the horn. Finding the night approach, and not knowing his way, he luckily espied a small path, and resolved to pursue it at all hazards, in hope that it might conduct him toward some habitation. In reality it soon led him entirely out of the forest, and presented him with the pleasing view of a strong and well-built castle.

All the residents of the castle had already re-

tired to rest ; so that the king was obliged to knock and call several times. He declared himself a knight that had lost his way, and asked for shelter from the owner. The porter went immediately to call his master, who rose in haste, and came to receive the pretended knight at the drawbridge. He then recognised the king, received him with the respect due to his sovereign, and ordered his wife and daughter to dress themselves with expedition, and come to pay their respects to the royal guest.

Soon after, the hostess entered the hall, leading in her hand her daughter, a young lady of prodigious beauty. They made a low courtesy to the prince, who returned the salute with politeness, but not without agitation : for he had no sooner cast his eyes upon the Castellan's daughter, than he was captivated with her charms. While supper was preparing, he sat down near the lovely object and kept his eyes riveted upon her. The tables were at length spread, and covered with delicacies that might have provoked the most indifferent appetite ; but the enamoured prince could attend to nothing but the new object of his admiration, and was content to feast his eyes on the contemplation of her charms. "What perfection," he exclaimed to himself, "has nature centred in this beautiful creature ! What are all my riches in comparison with so precious a jewel ; I cannot resist the satisfaction I feel in loving her, and if she will consent

to make a return to my passion, I certainly shall not scruple to place her upon my throne."

After supper the king, who was much fatigued, retired to the chamber that was prepared for him. Yet how much soever his limbs might want repose, he could not sleep the whole night, but passed it in anxious thought and amorous solicitude. "But why torment myself?" said he at last. "Does it not rest entirely with myself whether I marry the maid and put an end to my uneasiness. Yes, assuredly, her father will not object to my proposal, but will embrace it with as much pleasure as I can make the offer."

Accordingly, the next day, when the lord came with his wife and daughter to pay their respects to the sovereign, the latter desired the young lady to sit down by him, and addressed himself thus to the father: "My kind host, I have to propose a husband for your daughter, who I hope will suit you. That husband, sir, is myself. I love the damsel, and if you will consent to give me her hand, she shall be my queen, as I expect that her qualifications will correspond with your rank and her beauty."

At these words the two parents and the daughter threw themselves at the king's feet, to thank him for the favour he intended them. They were immediately betrothed to each other; and soon after the royal suite appeared at the gates of the castle. They had learned at last that the king was there,

having been the whole night in search of him. The king presented to them his destined bride, and after a few hours' stay went off with his attendants, promising the parents that he would within three days return to celebrate and consummate the nuptials. But he first took the young lady aside, and in his impatience to enjoy such heavenly charms, he entreated her to favour him the next night with a private interview. She, who was all simplicity, had no idea but that the moment they were betrothed the bridegroom entered into full possession of a husband's rights; she therefore not only complied with his request, but even gave him a key of the sally-port, that he might gain admittance unperceived, and promised to leave open the door of her chamber.

Among the officers in the king's suite was his seneschal, a man of a greedy and brutal disposition, who harassed the vassals in such a manner as to have become universally hated by them. The monarch could not help speaking to him on the road concerning the object of his love, and particularly expressed his eagerness to enjoy the pleasures of the next day's assignation. "Sire," said the seneschal, "I am your servant, and hold it my duty to do all that lies within my power to preserve your honour. Then, reflect, sir, that what you now propose would be a very singular abuse of the simplicity of the girl; and to take so dishonourable an advantage would, in the end,

instead of pleasure, be productive of nothing but shame and sorrow." This reproof made its impression on the king. He repented of his purpose, and tied himself down by a solemn oath not to keep the assignation ; nay, further to secure himself from temptation, he put it out of his own power to transgress by giving the key to his confidant.

Now, that was exactly what the perfidious wretch wanted. He had been inspired with love and desire by the beautiful simplicity and graceful charms of the young lady. His passion had entirely got the command of him, and in dissuading the king from going to her chamber his aim was to get there himself. By means of the key and the appointment that had been fixed, he easily attained his purpose. He found the chamber door open, and the betrothed virgin in bed. But scarcely had she forfeited that precious name, before she suspected some artifice. "The king, my husband," said she within herself, "is young and well-made. He has not the clumsy shape of this man. Ah ! should this be any other than he, I should surely die with shame and vexation !"

While these reflections filled her mind with anxiety and anguish, the seneschal fell asleep. She then got up softly, went for a light, and in the utmost apprehension approached the bed to examine who was in it. Judge of her distraction when she found it was the seneschal ! "The

wretch has betrayed me !" she cried ; "but let him have a just return for it." In saying which, she seized his sword near the bed, and stabbed him to the heart.

But now that she had taken her revenge something still remained to be done. It was necessary to get rid of the dead body ; and that was not so easily to be accomplished. Fortunately there happened to be in the castle a female cousin of hers ; a young lady much of the same age, and her intimate friend. She went to wake this confidant, and to acquaint her with the double misfortune. The latter proposed that the body should be thrown into an old neglected well near one of the turrets of the castle. Thither they dragged the seneschal not without difficulty ; and to prevent a discovery, after throwing him in, covered him in with earth, stones, and rubbish. They then washed away carefully all traces of blood, so that on the break of day there was not the least vestige left. As on his departure he had not declared whither he was going, no suspicion arose of what had happened. A search was made after him for a few days ; but all inquiries being ineffectual, he was given up as lost, and soon forgotten.

Meanwhile the king, stimulated by his passion, assembled his barons to consult them respecting the nuptials ; and with their approbation he returned to the residence of his beautiful mistress, whom that very day he married. The assemblage on

this joyful occasion was numerous both in knights and ladies, and the usual celebrities were exhibited. But at night the queen found herself extremely embarrassed. Since the seneschal had ravished from her by artifice what she ought to have preserved for her husband, she reflected that she was not in a condition to furnish those proofs of virtue which a bridegroom has a right to expect. She entreated then her cousin to come once more to her assistance, and to occupy her place for that night by the king's side. "As soon as the lights are extinguished," said she, "I will conduct you to his bed in my room; and when sleep has closed his eyes, I will come and resume my situation." This stratagem succeeded. The cousin with great complaisance consented to act the part proposed to her; the king was imposed on, and towards the middle of the night fell fast asleep.

The queen was all this time upon the watch, full of anxiety and apprehension. When she found the prince was asleep, she entered the chamber, and going softly up to the bed, pulled her cousin by the foot, as a signal for her to retire; but this last became treacherous in her turn, refused to obey it, and declared, in spite of the other's tears and entreaties, that she would not stir from the bed without the king; that she would be queen, since she had the honour of representing the character. She then turned about to sleep. The queen on this found it necessary to keep terms no

longer. She took a handkerchief, tied her cousin to the bed-post, and set fire to the clothes. The whole was quickly in flames. The king, awakened by the heat, jumped out, saved himself in his shirt, and was happy to find the queen, his wife, out of danger. The progress of the fire was soon stopped; but the apartment was consumed, and in it the faithless cousin, who reaped no other fruit from her treachery. The following day the royal couple took their departure, and went to the king's palace, where they lived comfortably together.

In the midst of her happiness, the conscience of the queen reproached her with the two murders she had perpetrated. Nevertheless, she had not the resolution to confess them. To stifle her compunctions, she went every day to mass, built churches to the Virgin, and endowed convents. At length she determined to ease her mind by a confession, and for that purpose addressed herself to the chaplain of the palace. This man was a hypocrite, and had entertained a desire for the queen's person. At the recital of the transaction he reprimanded her severely, and signified to her that it could not be expiated any other way than by death upon the pile. He gave her a hint, however, that a little complaisance towards him might save her. She answered his proposal with the strongest abhorrence and indignation. "If I have injured my lord and sovereign," said she, "it has been innocently and through ignorance on my part.

Know that I am resolved to preserve during life my fidelity to him ; and that I would expire in the flames sooner than sully his honour and my own."

The chaplain went immediately to reveal her confession to the king ; and to verify it, he conducted his majesty to the well, where they really found the remains of the seneschal. Instantly the queen was seized, tried by the bishops, and condemned to be burnt. Already were they conducting her to execution when she implored the succour of the Virgin, whom she had ever devoutly served ; and her prayers were not ineffectual. An aged hermit, sent by our Lady, comes up to the monarch, and acquaints him that she had taken the queen under her holy protection. The king, in consequence, sends for his consort. She arrives with her hands bound, and her eyes covered with a bandage. But on a sudden the bonds were loosened, and the bandage fell from her face ; at the same time a dove descended, and place upon her head a paper, on which was written an account of her innocence and the crime of the chaplain. The king then embraced his consort, and entreated her forgiveness, while he punished the chaplain by devoting him to the fate he had intended for the queen.

THE KNIGHT THAT CONFESSED HIS WIFE.

NOT far from Vire, in the district of Bessin, there was a family that was held up as a model of concord to all the neighbourhood. The husband, a worthy knight, had so much love for his wife, and reposed so unreserved a confidence in her, that he not only left her entirely mistress of her own conduct, but he even carried his complaisance so far as not to enter into the most trifling undertaking without first consulting her. The lady enjoyed an unsullied reputation in the country. Thus did she pass with her turtle dove many happy years. But quite suddenly she was taken ill so dangerously as to be alarmed for her life. She sent on the occasion for the parson of the parish, made her confession to him, and placed in his hands for pious uses all that belonged to her. Nevertheless, not thinking one absolution enough, she called her husband: "My dear lord," said she, "do me a particular favour. I have often heard talk of a votary of the neighbouring monastery, whom all the world declares a holy

man. In my present condition, I should be greatly relieved in mind, if through him I could effect my reconciliation with God ; send, I entreat you, one of your servants for him.”—“I will not send,” answered the husband, “but will go myself.” He accordingly mounted his horse, and repaired to the monastery. But on the way he entered into a series of reflections on this folly of having a second confessor. Such earnest desire of the patient incited his curiosity to learn the motive ; and in order to know it to a certainty, he resolved to return and put himself in the place of the monk.

Arrived at the convent, he went to pay a visit to the prior. This man who was his particular acquaintance, on seeing the knight approach, ran to meet him, and gave his horse in charge to a servant. “I think myself infinitely indebted to you,” said he, “for this unexpected visit. Come in, and since you have favoured me with the pleasure of your company at last, I give you notice that I shall not quickly part with it.”—“My good sir,” answered the knight, “I am extremely obliged to you, and no one can be more sensible of your civility ; but I cannot possibly reap the advantage of it. I must return instantly, and have only come to beg you will do me a small service. I want for a short time one of your robes : lend it to me, I pray, with your horse and boots. I will come back at midnight, and return them to you.” The

prior assented; and the knight, dressing himself in the monastic habit, went in that disguise towards his castle.

In order that he might not be discovered, he took care not to get there till night, and to let down his hood in such a manner as entirely to cover his face. A valet assisted him in dismounting, and presenting him to one of the female servants, he was conducted to the sick lady's apartment. There was no other light in the room than what was afforded by a small lamp, set in the further end of the fire-place. "Madam," said the girl, "here is the holy man you sent for."—"Introduce him to the bedside," answered the lady, "and leave us together. Ah! sir," added she, addressing herself to the pretended monk, "how long have I been anxiously desirous to see you. I am greatly in want of consolation. Sit down, I entreat you."—"My good lady," answered he, in a counterfeit tone of voice, "it is proof of your good sense that you are anxious to recover God's grace. He is the sole arbiter of life and death, and can deprive us of existence in a moment. Have confidence, then, in his mercy, and humbly make confession of your faults; but hide none of your transgressions; for you know it is written, one sin concealed is enough to destroy the soul."—"I have many to repent of," replied the wife; "I have enjoyed a good reputation, one that I have in no respect deserved. Alas! how often does it happen that a woman for a

single oversight encounters a disgrace that is infinitely more my due. I have often been unfaithful to my husband ; and I pray God to pardon me for it."

At these words one may conceive the face which the husband made under his hood. "Madam," said he, "you have been guilty of an enormous sin. Are you not instructed in your duties? Had you any reason to complain of your husband?" "No, sir ; but you will find very few women who preserve their fidelity. How young and handsome soever the husband may be, the desires of the wife preponderate over his love. Often he is so cold and indifferent as to neglect his duties. The wife, through fear of losing his esteem or suggesting suspicions, dare not remind him of them ; and in spite of all the resolutions she may have formed, necessity soon obliges her to make choice of another." "And with whom have you transgressed?" demanded the husband. "Ah ! sir, that is what aggravates my crime, and makes me now tremble for my salvation. It was with the nephew of my lord. I loved him to distraction, and should have died with grief if I had not succeeded in raising in his breast a reciprocal passion. I at length accomplished it, after a long trial ; and it is now full five years that we have cohabited together." "With the nephew of your own husband ! Why, lady, were you not aware that such a connection borders upon incest?" "I knew it, sir ; but such is

the extremity to which we women of quality are reduced. Surrounded by servants, who are placed as spies upon our actions, we are obliged, if we wish to escape their notice, to choose our lovers among those whom they have the least reason to suspect. This was the case of my nephew. A hundred times a-day could he come in and go out of my apartment without giving rise to any scandalous surmise ; and of that circumstance I took advantage. Often have I shared with him the property of my husband ; for I have acquired the entire superintendence in the castle, and have had all at my disposal. If strangers come, they inquire after me alone ; they do not so much as reflect there is a master, who is in fact nobody, and whose power I have annihilated. Such is the disposition of women, who always aim at command and authority."

The knight was not desirous of hearing more. He enjoined the sick lady penitence, and returned to the prior with his habit ; after which he came back to his own house, where his first care was to turn his nephew out of doors.

A fortunate crisis saved the lady. In a few days she got rid of her disorder : but one morning, as she was issuing her orders to the servants in her accustomed tone of authority, the husband was irritated by her imperious behaviour and the recollection of what she had divulged ; and rising up in heat, said, "By what authority, madam, do you

assume this insolence of conduct? I know, indeed, that it is the disposition of women, and that they always aim at command; but when they are disloyal, they ought to blush in the face of the world and put on a little modesty."

The wife did but laugh at this effusion of rage, and answered with wonderful calmness: "Trying spirit as thou art! thinkest thou that thy artifices are not to be detected? A fine stratagem to put on the appearance of a monk! It was necessary then at the same time to change both voice and countenance. Confess at least that I have had tolerable revenge. Another perhaps in my situation, on seeing you come in that disguise to extort secrets from sick people, would have torn out your eyes. For my part, I was desirous of punishing your treachery in a different manner. Nevertheless, sir, in amusing myself at your expense, I found means to give you a few seasonable hints. Your nephew, for instance, cost us a great deal of money. If I had proposed to send him away, you and he together would have contested it with me. But I used a more concise method, and in a moment he was sent about his business. You forget sometimes, my good sir, that you have certain duties to perform; and although, as you well know, I am not very strict in requiring the discharge of them, yet you will do well to have them now and then in recollection. Finally, you place on me an absolute reliance: I am certainly much obliged to you

for your good opinion, and shall always endeavour not to abuse it ; but would it not be more becoming sometimes to put on the air of a man that knows something of his own affairs ? If you had lost me, for example, what would you have done at this instant ? It is not my interest but yours that I consider in all this ; for, notwithstanding your provoking reproof, I cannot help loving you. As for my conduct, it is irreproachable. I can boldly walk with my head upright, and do not fear under heaven a living person who can boast of being able to put me to the blush."

The knight could not do otherwise than yield to such plausible arguments. He acknowledged the injustice of his suspicions, and asked pardon for them with great humility ; and, impressed with admiration for so respectable a wife, he became still more submissive than he had been before. But when the affair was known in the neighbourhood, it gave rise among the ignorant people to a great deal of laughter.

THE WIFE OF ORLEANS.

FOUR scholars had come together to finish their studies at the University of Orleans. One of them conceived a violent inclination for a merchant's wife in the town, and he sought by every method to introduce himself to the lady. He at last accomplished his point, and was even so fortunate as to please her ; but his assiduity and the repetition of his visits excited some degree of jealousy in the husband who, to know whether there was any real ground for his suspicions, set a little niece, whom he had brought up in his family, to watch them.

The young girl was the better adapted to the task assigned her, on account of their having no mistrust of her. One day, as the scholar pressed the lady to appoint a meeting, "I cannot for the present," said the wife ; "but have patience. It will not be long before my husband sets out upon a journey. We shall then have opportunities enough to see one another ; and they will be further facilitated by the convenience with which I shall be

able to let you in, without being perceived, through the garden gate."

Unfortunately for them, this conversation was overheard by the little spy, who went immediately with the intelligence to her uncle. He, on being acquainted with their design, resolved that very day to lay his plot for detecting the lovers; and pretending that he was obliged to go to a fair, gave notice to his wife that he should set off the following day.

He accordingly took his departure; but at night he returned to Orleans, and favoured by the darkness, went and took his post at the garden gate, not doubting that the scholar had received notice to repair to it. His conjecture was well founded. At the appointed hour the dame went to open the gate. There she met with her husband; and in the persuasion that it was her lover, she embraced him, and took him by the hand to conduct him to her chamber. The other, lest he should be discovered, followed in silence, concealing his face with the hood of his cloak.

But it is easier to deceive twenty Arguses than a single woman. Too much precaution in her man inspired the lady with mistrust. She stopped a little to examine him, and found it to be no other than her own husband. Then, with an extraordinary presence of mind, she said to him, as if she thought herself addressing the lover, "How glad I am, my dear sir, that you have observed

punctually our appointment. Nevertheless, I cannot enjoy the pleasure of your company till all the family have gone to bed. But come along with me ; I will in the meantime hide you somewhere ; and as soon as I am disengaged, I will come and find you."

It sometimes happens that the ass has one thing in contemplation and the driver another, and that was what the jealous husband experienced on the present occasion. He reckoned on catching his wife in a snare, but was himself caught in it. The cunning woman led him to a lower room, in which she shut him up and returned to the garden gate, where she found the scholar who, to say the truth, met with a more cordial reception than the husband.

After a few caresses, from which it would be hard for two lovers who had so long wished for a meeting to refrain, the lady went down-stairs to speak to her servants. "You have seen," said she, "one of the scholars come frequently to my house. It is I know not how long that I have been teased with his importunate courtship ; and till this moment have I been puzzled, whatever means I have tried, to get rid of him. But at last, my patience being entirely exhausted, I have, in order to cure him of his passion, appointed a sham rendezvous in the absence of my husband. He is now actually shut up in one of the lower chambers. Here is the

key. Go and chastise him as he deserves, that he may never again be seized with an inclination to insult women of character. If you perform your business well, I promise that you shall all have plenty of good wine to regale you on your return."

This roused the whole family. Every one in the house—footman, cook, and chambermaid, the young niece herself, with two nephews of the merchant—sprang up, and providing themselves with canes and whips, they rushed into the lower chamber, and wrapping up the merchant's head in his hood, to prevent him from giving the alarm, they laid upon him without mercy. The unhappy wretch, after a severe beating, was driven out of the house, and thrown upon a dunghill. The wife in recompense treated them all on their return with good wine of Auvergnat. She then went quietly to supper with the scholar.

As for her husband, this discipline had brought him into so deplorable a condition, that the next day it was necessary for him to be carried into the house. His wife, as they brought him in, ran with terror in her looks, and asked him what misfortune had befallen him? He told her that he had been attacked on the road by robbers, and left half-dead upon the spot. She prepared immediately a medicinal bath for his reception. With care and good advice he soon got well. Amidst all his sufferings,

he thought himself at least fortunate in having acquired, though at a sore expense, a thorough knowledge of his wife's virtues, and thenceforward preserved toward her not less esteem than love.

THE PARSON'S LEGACY.

INSTEAD of the fables and fictions commonly retailed, hear the history of a parson in the vicinity of Antwerp.

His cure was tolerably good ; and with a spirit of economy that would not suffer him to squander away his substance, as many do, in luxurious or idle expenses, it enabled him in time to amass a good fortune. But neither his prudence nor his riches could avert the stroke of death. He became dropsical, and having no hope of recovery from the physicians whom he consulted, he made up his mind, allotted to pious and charitable purposes all that belonged to him, not overlooking the disposal of the most minute article of furniture in his house ; and after he had settled all his affairs and quieted his conscience, he thought of nothing but dying in peace.

In this conjuncture there came brother Lewis and brother Simon, two Dominicans of Antwerp, who preached in the neighbourhood, and had been often entertained at the parson's house. They reckoned on this occasion to find, as usual, good fare and

comfortable lodging ; but for once they were disappointed, and were obliged to go farther for a dinner. Nevertheless, they made inquiry concerning the particular circumstances of the sick man's disorder ; they felt his pulse, examined his arms, his legs, his body, and with a compassionate air agreed that he was too far gone for hope, and that the malady had increased to such a pitch that it would be impossible to stop the growth of it.

As they were going out, it occurred to them on reflection that the parson, having been a strict economist all his life, ought to have plenty of money in his coffers, and they formed a project for ridding him of a part of it. "We want twenty livres for our library," said they to each other ; "if we could get them out of this bloated divine, we should meet with a hearty welcome from the prior of the convent." This idea made so strong an impression on them that they resolved to follow it up ; and in consequence brother Lewis, as the more persuasive speaker of the two, undertook the office.

He returned then to the patient, and began with the insinuating language of devotion to discourse on death and repentance ; he exhorted the sick man to think of the salvation of his soul, and to redeem his past offences by charitable donations. "That has already been my care," answered the dying man. "Of all my worldly possessions there is none that I have not given or bequeathed for the love of God ; and everything about me, to the

very bed you see me lying on, has its assignment." "What, sirs ! have you given away all ?" cried the monk in astonishment. "Know you not that, to please God, it is not enough to do acts of charity ; but that we should, according to the expression of the Scriptures, examine how we do them ?" "I could not easily err in that particular," replied the parson. "This village has fed me to the present hour ; and to it I have bequeathed my stock of grain, which may be worth ten livres. I have in it some needy relations, to whom I make the bequest of my flocks and my cattle. I have not forgotten the orphans nor the sick ; I have left, besides, the Beguines a legacy, and the Cordeliers a hundred pence." "These disposals are indeed extremely meritorious," said the Jacobine ; "but it seems you have overlooked our brotherhood ! a convent full of so many religious and holy persons, who fast incessantly, wear no linen, and every day offer up their prayers for you ! Ah, brother, God will not have mercy on you."

The priest, somewhat astonished at this language, answered that he was very unfortunate in having been so precipitate ; but that it was now, to his great regret, too late to repair his deficiency ; that he had now nothing left to give—not a farthing, not a single grain. The two monks would not so easily give up their point, but returned to the attack. They proposed to have the will cancelled, and to have the disposal of some of the legacies altered, that they

might come in for a share. If they might be believed, this was the most advisable bequest for one in his situation ; and in suggesting it to him, they avowed that they had less regard to the wants of their monastery, however pressing they might be, than to the tender solicitude they felt for the salvation of his soul.

This shameful and unchristian-like avidity raised the indignation of the parson. He resolved on punishing the two canting hypocrites, and before his death to divert at their expense the townsmen of Antwerp. "My good brethren," said he, after appearing to have been for a few moments absorbed in reflection, "I confess that I have still remaining a precious jewel, of which I did not take notice ; but it is an article that I cannot possibly part with before I die : and desperate as my condition appears, I could not think of giving it up for a hundred marks in gold, if they were offered for it. I will, however, leave it to you after I am gone ; and I thank God for having sent you here, while I am yet alive, to urge me to the accomplishment of so good a work. Let your prior come to-morrow, and I will make him a formal assignment of it.

The monks, delighted at this promise, took their departure. On their arrival at the monastery, they had a chapter assembled ; there they gave a relation of the happy fruits of their zeal, and required, to celebrate their good fortune, a feast that very night in the hall. This demand was seconded with great

ardour, and unanimously granted. The prior sent out for all kinds of delicacies. Instead of the wines in common consumption, he ordered the very best and oldest the town could supply. They caroused and sang, and drank to their dropsical benefactor, as well as to brother Lewis who, elated with the success of his eloquence, made an effort to preserve an air of modest diffidence.

During all this time the bells of the church were ringing in peals, as if the body of a saint had arrived. The neighbours, stunned with the noise, inquired what festival they were celebrating. In the midst, however, of their holy orgies, brother Lewis, in the true spirit of a consummate politician, whom neither glory nor pleasure can divert from the steady prosecution of his design, brought back the consideration of his brethren to the jewel, and recommended that the necessary provision should be made for the next day's journey. For his own part, being eager to have the honour of accomplishing the work himself, he was of opinion that it was needless for the prior to give himself the trouble of going to the village, and offered himself to return there with brothers Giles, Nicholas, William, and Robert. Full power was given him to settle this matter as he pleased. Mirth and wine together had rendered them so giddy, that whatever he might have thought proper to recommend would have received the same implicit assent.

The following day, on the first dawn of the

morning, the five associates set out, and never stopped till they arrived at the village, so apprehensive were they of coming too late and finding the parson dead. They saluted him devoutly in the Lord's name, and asked him if he did not find himself a little easier. "Alas! my worthy brothers," he answered, "my hour approaches; nevertheless, you are welcome. I have not forgotten the promise which I made yesterday to brother Lewis. Let one go to the town; it will be proper to bring the mayor and the sheriffs, that they may witness the grant, and thus prevent any one from contesting it with you."

This was a fresh sally of the parson's humour, to give them the trouble of another march. The five monks, all smoking with perspiration, with their mouths open and tongues hanging out, looked like greyhounds that had been all day on the chase. Brother Giles and brother Robert, nevertheless, offered to return to Antwerp, and, notwithstanding their fatigue, set out again upon the expedition. At length, after a few hours had elapsed, they arrived with the magistrates.

The parson, after paying his respects to these officers, and desiring them to sit down, addressed them in the following words: "I was yesterday, gentlemen, as you now behold me, lying on this hard couch, when brother Lewis, whom you see before you, came with one of his associates to take

up his lodging in my house. Like a worthy preacher of God's Word, he exhorted me to death and repentance, but above all to redeem my sins by a legacy to his convent. He represented to me, through zeal for my salvation, that if I did not bequeath them something, God would have no mercy on me; when I on my part, like a true Christian who is anxious for the future welfare of his soul, recollected that I had still left something very valuable which I might present to them. I declare then, in your presence, gentlemen, that from this moment I bequeath it to them in full right to have and hold it after my decease."

The monks hardly knew what to think of this speech, half serious and half ironical. They pretended, however, not to understand the reproof which the parson's sneer had conveyed; and brother Lewis, the orator of the embassy, pressed the dying man to declare at once to the magistrate what this valuable bequest was. "My good sirs," said he, "it is my bladder, of which I desire them to make a purse in which they may go about and receive their legacies. My disorder must have made it large: it will hold a good deal, and I wish them success in filling it."

At these words, all who were present—magistrates, attendants, and others—set up so loud and hearty a laugh, that the monks withdrew in confusion, cursing brother Lewis and his eloquence. What

happened on their return to the monastery I cannot say ; but I know that the affair was soon circulated through the town of Antwerp, and had such an effect, that for a long time no Jacobine could show his face in it.

THE CITIZEN OF ABBEVILLE.

A RICH trader of Abbeville, having become entangled in disputes and law-suits with a very powerful family, formed the resolution, in order to prevent his utter ruin, of emigrating from his native place, and settling with his wife and family at Paris. There he rendered homage to the king, and became his subject. The knowledge that he had acquired of business, of which he took advantage to carry on a little traffic, afforded him the means of adding something to his property. He was much beloved in the neighbourhood for his civility and plain dealing.

Thus did our honest citizen pass seven years in his new residence, at the expiration of which God was pleased to take away his wife. For thirty years they had been united, without ever having the least difference. The son for several days was so greatly afflicted at the loss, that his father was obliged to try all in his power to console the youth. "Your mother is gone," said he; "it is a misfortune that cannot be remedied. Let us only pray God to have mercy on her; our tears will not restore her

to us. For my own part, all I can expect is very soon to go and join her. At my age we must not look far forward. It is in you, my son, that all my hopes centre. All my relations and friends are left behind me in Ponthieu, and I shall never expect to see any of them more. Strive to improve yourself, and to become an accomplished youth. If I can find a young lady of good birth and character, whose family may furnish us with an agreeable society, I will give her whatever portion may be demanded, and will end my old days with her and you."

Now, in the same street with our citizen, and almost directly opposite, lived three brothers, knights and gentlemen both by the father's and the mother's side, and all three esteemed for their valour. The eldest was a widower, and had a daughter. The whole family was poor; not that they were originally without fortune, but in a moment of difficulty having been obliged to have recourse to usurers, their debt, by the rapid accumulation of interest, had amounted to three thousand livres, for which their property was either pledged or taken in execution, very little remaining to the father beyond the house in which he resided. This was so good, that he might easily have let it for twenty livres. He would rather have sold the house, had it been in his power; but it had been his wife's property, and reverted to the daughter.

The citizen went to demand the girl in marriage

of the three brothers. They, before they gave him their answer, desired to know what was his fortune. "In money and effects," said he, "I am worth fifteen hundred livres, which I have honestly acquired. Half of it I will give immediately to my son, and the other half shall go to him after my death." "Honest friend," replied the brothers, "that will not do. You now promise that you will leave your son half of your property after your decease, and you promise it in so ingenuous a manner that we have no reason to doubt your sincerity. But between that and the present time you may take it into your head to be, made a monk or a templar, and then all must go to the convent, so that your grandchildren will not come in for a doit.

The three brothers then required that, before the contract was concluded, the citizen should make an entire grant of all his property, otherwise they would not agree to the marriage. The good man did not at first fully approve these conditions; but, paternal affection getting the better at length of his scruples, he consented; and in the presence of some witnesses, who were convoked for the occasion, he renounced solemnly all his effects, not leaving himself wherewithal to purchase a dinner. Thus did he pave the way to his own misery, by placing himself in entire dependence on his children. If he had been aware of what awaited him, he would have been careful how he exposed himself to such privation.

The young couple soon had a son who, as he grew up, gave the most flattering testimonies of a great fund of good sense and many amiable qualities. In the meanwhile, the old man lived, sometimes better and sometimes worse, at his son's house. He was just tolerated because he still gained something by his industry. But with years his infirmities increased; and when he was no longer able to work, they began to consider him as an encumbrance. The wife especially, being of a proud, haughty disposition, could not bear him. Every day she threatened to leave the house unless he was removed; and she became so importunate with her husband upon this head, that he, like an ungrateful monster, forgetting the debt of gratitude and of nature, went to intimate to his unhappy father, that it was necessary for him to seek an asylum in some other place.

"What is it you tell me, son?" cried the old man. "What! have I given you the produce of sixty years' labour, and established you in affluence, to be turned out of my own house? Will you punish me, then, for the excess of my paternal love? In the name of God, my dear son, I conjure you not to let me die of want! You know that I am unable to walk; grant me at least some useless corner of your house. I ask neither for a bed nor for the provisions of the table. A little straw thrown under a shed, with some bread and water, will satisfy me. At my age life requires so little;

and besides, with all my infirmities and cares, I cannot possibly be long a burden to you. If you are disposed to give alms in expiation of your sins, let it be to your father ; can any charity be more praiseworthy ? Recollect, my dear son, what bringing you up in the course of thirty years cost me ; think of the blessings that God has promised to those that have regard to their parents here on earth, and dread His eternal anger if you should venture to be yourself the murderer of your father."

This pathetic speech caused an emotion in the son ; he, nevertheless, alleged the aversion and discontent of his wife, and for the sake of family quiet required the old man's departure. "Where would you have me go ?" replied the father. "Will strangers receive me, when my own son turns me out of doors ? Without money, without resource, I must then beg the bread necessary for subsistence." As he spoke, the old man's face was bathed with tears. He took, however, the stick that helped him to keep himself erect, and rising, prayed God to forgive his son. But before he went out he asked a last favour. "The winter," said he, "is approaching, and if I am condemned to exist till then, I shall have nothing to defend me from the cold. My coat is in rags. In return for the many that I have been obliged to provide you with during your life, grant me one of yours. I require only one of the worst, one that you have entirely cast off." This slender boon was also denied him.

The wife answered that there was no coat in the house that would suit him. He then entreated that they would at least give him one of the horse's body-cloths, and the son, finding that he could object no longer, made the young boy a signal to bring one.

This youth could not see without being deeply affected at the distress of his grandfather. He was now ten years old, and was endowed, as was said before, with many amiable qualities. He went and took out of the stable the best of the housings, which he cut into two parts, and brought one of them to the old man. "All then have conspired to seek my death," said he, sobbing. "I had obtained the promise of that poor solace, and yet I am envied the whole of it!" The son could not avoid reproving his boy for going beyond the directions he had received. "Pardon me, sir," said the youth; "but I thought that you wanted to kill your father as soon as possible, and I wished to second your design. As for the other half of the horsecloth, it shall not be lost; I intend keeping it to give it to you when you are old."

So well contrived a rebuke had its effect on the ungrateful son. He perceived his fault, and asking pardon of his father, led him once more into the house, put him in possession of his former property, and thenceforward behaved towards him with the respect and regard due to his age and condition

THE ILL-CUT MANTLE.

A COMIC STORY.

AT Whitsuntide King Arthur held a very brilliant court, for he had summoned all the princes, dukes, counts, and barons, his vassals, and as he intended to have a splendid tournament, they were all desired to bring their wives or mistresses along with them. This was accordingly done ; and there was so great a concourse of nobles and knights, with their wives and sweethearts, that so fine an assemblage had never before been seen in Brittany.

All were disposed, on this festive occasion, to indulge themselves in gallantry, mirth and pleasure ; and it doubtless would have happened so beyond parallel and without alloy, had not the fairy Morgana, through envy of the queen's beauty and jealousy of Sir Lancelot whom she loved, formed a design by her enchantment to disturb the peace of this charming assembly. Perhaps, if the queen had invited her to the feast, the mischief had not happened.

Already were the tables placed in preparation for dinner, and the king was engaged in conversation at a window with Sir Gawayne, when they descried a young gentleman coming on horseback, and bearing a fine valise of crimson velvet tied up with unusual care. As soon as he had dismounted, he took his valise under his arm, walked up the steps of the palace, and entered the hall. The company made way for him, and he, approaching the king with bended knee, addressed him thus—“Sire, I am sent to you from a lady of distinction, who loves you. She has a request to make to you ; and before I declare what it is, I assure you on her part, that in assenting to it you will not render yourself liable either to reproach or evil.” The king bowed his head, and said, “Friend, I grant your mistress’s suit.” The gentleman thanked him in his lady’s name, and opened the valise.

It may be imagined that the king and all his company were very desirous to know what that contained. The messenger now drew out of it a mantle, for richness and elegance superior to anything that yet had been displayed in that kingdom. Nor are we to wonder at the surprising beauty of the mantle. It was the workmanship of a fairy, and had by enchantment the virtue of discovering the infidelity of all ladies and damsels ; for it would sit on none, without being either too long or too short, who had been disloyal to their lord or lover. It was a contrivance of the mischievous Morgana,

that the queen and the ladies might expose themselves by wearing it. If they had known the power which it possessed, never would they have chosen to have anything to do with it.

The gentleman employed by the fairy as her messenger then presented it to the king, explaining to him its virtue, and adding, "Sire, the favour that my lady ordered me to request of you, and which you have been pleased to grant, is that no lady or damsel in your court shall be exempted from putting on the mantle; and to her on whom it shall appear neither too long nor too short, my lady makes it a present, that it may be an ornament to her all her life."

When the king perceived that he had made an irrefragable promise of such tendency, he was greatly concerned. But it was then too late, and it was necessary to comply. Sir Gawayne then observed to him, "Sire, since it must be so, the queen and all the ladies should be sent for." "Do you then go upon that errand," answered the king; "for I am resolved to keep my promise." Gawayne accordingly went to find the queen, and told her that the king desired she would attend him in the hall with all her beautiful companions, since to her who was adjudged the most handsome his majesty intended to make a present. He took care not to divulge the qualities of the mantle, otherwise not one would have obeyed the summons.

The queen, then, with her noble company, came

into the presence of the king who, spreading out the mantle, said, "Madam, I give this fine robe to the lady whom it will best fit in this assembly." He added not another word, and wished indeed that he had got rid of the business. The queen, observing the extraordinary beauty of the robe, coveted it most heartily, and threw it upon her shoulders, to try how it would fit, when it was found to be a little too short before, though behind it was quite long enough.

Sir Ivain, who perceived the queen change colour (for from the laughter of the bystanders she surmised some hidden pleasantry) addressed her thus—"Madam, I think this mantle is not long enough for you ; let that young lady near you try it." The damsel took it, and put it on with alacrity ; but it was too short by more than half a foot. Sir Queux, who was the most vainglorious buffoon in the king's household, said to the queen, "Madam, you are more loyal than she." "Sir Queux," said the queen, "what do you mean by that expression ? I beg you will explain it to me."

He then related to her majesty every particular of the affair. The queen was possessed of prudence, and saw at once that if she betrayed anger, her shame would only be more flagrant. She therefore pretended to laugh it off as one of Morgana's envious tricks ; and though she would much rather not have been present at the ceremony, she called out with a good-humoured countenance, "Come,

ladies ! what do you wait for ? why hesitate, since I set the first example ? ”

Sir Queux, who was quite delighted to see the poor ladies entangled in this manner, cried, “ Ladies, come forward, and prove this day your fidelity to all those ill-fated knights who for your sakes undergo so many hardships. ” When they heard these words, every one heartily wished herself at home. They all refused to try on the robe ; and the king, taking pity on them, said to the messenger, “ Friend, I recommend you to take back your mantle ; for it seems to be so ill made, that, as far as I can see, it will not fit any of these ladies. ” “ Ah, sire, ” answered the knight, “ I claim the performance of your promise : a king’s word is always held sacred. ”

At that moment there was not in the whole court a wife or mistress whose countenance and spirits were unmoved. All were so polite as to decline the priority of trial. The queen observed Sir Queux very busy with his raillery. She called to him, and said, “ Sir Queux, try it on your own wife, without so much noise and bustle ; we shall see how it becomes her. ” Now he was married to a very fine woman, invested with a high post in the queen’s household ; in whom he had such confidence, that he thought, if she was unfaithful, there could be no such thing as fidelity in the world. He called her instantly— “ Come, my love, to-day shall you make known your worth, and be proclaimed the mirror of wives. Take that mantle boldly, and put it on, for I be-

lieve it was made for you alone." His wife answered, "I think it more advisable to leave it to those ladies near me ; they will imagine that I claim it through pride or arrogance, and will owe me no good-will on that account." "Never mind that, my dear," replied the husband ; "for I vow, however they may be offended, you shall be the first to try it." He then, without more ado, himself threw it upon her back. But this vile mantle was so extremely short behind that it barely covered the waist, and before it did not reach the knee. Sir Queux was so confounded that he knew not how to act ; he saw it was impossible to cover his disgrace. All were delighted with the circumstance, on account of his malignant satisfaction at the embarrassment of the ladies. Sir Idier said to him, "What do you mean to do with this mantle, since it fits your wife so well ? Do you intend that she should keep it ? or will you let the others have a trial ?" Sir Queux hung down his head in confusion, and made no answer ; but the wife, full of shame and vexation, threw it down, and ran away.

The ladies were wonderfully troubled to find that they must all make an essay. Sir Lucan, a great favourite of the king, said to him, "Sire, you should have the robe tried on the mistress of Sir Gawayne." The latter had always some suspicion of her connection with another knight, and would have been heartily glad if she could be excused taking a part in the game. Nevertheless,

the king ordered the lady to be called, and she could not but obey the mandate. The mantle was put on her, and extended so far behind, that it made a train of near a foot and a half, while the right lappet did not fall below the garter.

Sir Queux, who had for some time lost the faculty of speech, then recovered it, and expressed his joy that there were others to laugh at as well as himself. Sir Gawayne eyed his mistress askance, with an air that by no means indicated satisfaction. Sir Queux took and seated her next his wife, saying, "Madam, keep close to my wife, for you are as good a woman as she." The king, finding the whole court convulsed with laughter, could not prevent himself from giving way to it likewise ; and since it had proceeded so far, he was resolved to see the end of the farce. He took by the hand the mistress of Sir Ivain, and observed to her, "This mantle, Mademoiselle, should of right be your property ; for I never heard anything of you that could forfeit your claim to it."

The mantle was accordingly wrapped about her, but it made a piteous sight ; for while it lay upon the ground, and encumbered her feet before, it just came down to her waist behind. "Good heavens !" cried Girflet, "here is a terrible imposture ! He must be mad that puts confidence in woman !"

The king next pitched upon Percival's mistress. The poor young lady submitted to have the mantle put upon her back, since there was no possibility to

avoid it. In fact, it fitted so indifferently, that the strings broke off, and the robe slipped upon the ground. The damsel, in great dudgeon, left it lying there, and with downcast looks went to take her seat by the others, cursing the invention in her heart. The king became a little chagrined at the distress of the poor ladies, and wished to drop all further investigation. But the messenger refused to comply, and called upon him to perform the promise that he had solemnly made before all his court.

The mistress of Sir Idier next tried the robe, with the same success as the others, and was conducted by Queux as a proper companion for his wife. Finally, there was not a knight who did not, to his great sorrow and mortification, try it on either his wife or mistress ; and it was peculiarly unfortunate that those who had the greatest confidence were the most disappointed. The messenger, perceiving that his mantle would fit none of the ladies who were there present, cried out, "Sire, I entreat you, in order that I may be enabled fully to discharge my duty, that you will cause all the apartments to be searched, to see if there is any lady left who has not yet put on the mantle."

The king then gave his orders to Girflet, who went, and after searching all the chambers, found only one young lady sick in bed. "Rise, fair lady," said Girflet, "the king requires your presence in the hall." "Messire Girflet," answered the damsel, "I would obey the royal mandate with pleasure, but

you see what condition I am in, on which account I think you ought to excuse me." "Madam," replied Girflet, "I shall wait till you are dressed and ready to come along with me." When she found no excuse would be taken, she rose and repaired to the hall.

Her lover was there, by name Karrados, a good and valiant knight. As he saw her coming, all his blood was put into a sudden motion, and it was clearly perceived in his face. He had congratulated himself that she was not in the company, on account of the danger he thought she would incur, and the mortification he had witnessed in others. But his joy was converted into chagrin, as he concluded that he would come in for his share of the shame and disgrace; for he loved her ardently, and if he could have prevented it, would never have suffered her to try the mantle. He therefore, coming up to her, said, "My love, I entreat you, if you have any doubts, do not put on the robe; for I would not on any consideration be a witness of your shame, and have my esteem and regard lessened. I would rather remain in ignorance than know a disagreeable truth, and have the mortification to behold you seated by Mademoiselle Genelas and the wife of Sir Queux." Girflet then took up the discourse, and said to Karrados, "About what do you make yourself uneasy? don't you see more than two hundred ladies sitting there, whose loyalty was this morning thought as unimpeachable as any in the country?"

The damsel, whom nothing alarmed or disconcerted, took the mantle and boldly wrapped it round her; and indeed her confidence was well founded; for it sat so well both before and behind, that no milliner on earth could have fitted her better. The messenger, who now saw the adventure accomplished, said aloud, "Lady, you have given your lover cause indeed for exultation; I leave you the mantle, for it is your right." The king confirmed the award. There was neither lady nor knight who did not envy the lot of these two lovers; but they thought it best to keep their sentiments to themselves. So they returned home in sorrow and mortification; nor could they be induced again to laugh at what had passed. Sir Karrados went off in raptures with his mistress; and they carried the robe along with them, taking care to cherish and preserve it.

THE GREY PALFREY.

IN Champagne there lived in former days Godfrey, a brave knight, richly endowed in body and mind, but poor in purse. Indebted chiefly to his valour for a subsistence, all his possessions consisted of a small estate, the rental of which was about two hundred livres; and the scantiness of his means was the more to be lamented, as in addition to his courage he was a man of strict probity and honour. Whenever he appeared at a tournament, his time was not wasted in a display of empty address or vain gallantries toward the ladies; but he rushed without ostentation into the thickest of the throng, and never left the ground till he had unhorsed or subdued his opponents. These good qualities and rare accomplishments rendered his name famous, and gained him consideration in every quarter.

In the neighbourhood of Godfrey there lived a very rich lord. He was a widower; and his marriage had produced him a very handsome daughter, called Nina. His mansion, as well as that of our knight, was situated in the woods (for Champagne

at that time abounded in forests still more than at the present hour) ; and they were little more than a league distant from each other. But that of the old lord, built on a very steep declivity, was defended by a deep ditch and an impenetrable thorn hedge ; so that there was no access to it but by the draw-bridge. He lived here in tranquillity with his daughter, making the most of his lands, which brought him an annual income of at least a thousand livres.

With such an inheritance and so much beauty, the young lady could not fail of having a numerous train of admirers. Of that number was Godfrey. Zealous to exert himself in the service of a mistress so distinguished for rank and merit, he strove earnestly to please her ; and in a short time, by means of his constant attentions and some brilliant feats of valour, he succeeded. But when the father perceived the knight's visits become too frequent, he forbade his daughter speaking to him, and treated him with such coolness that the favoured lover thought it imprudent to return.

Thus was all communication stopped between the two ; and the father's age no longer permitting him to ride out, there was no hope of an interview in his absence. Besides, the old fox, having been himself a man of intrigue in his younger days, had learned by experience to be mistrustful and guarded. Had Godfrey asked but for a sight of his mistress, even that feeble consolation had been denied him.

At last, as he was one day roaming and searching about the walls, he discovered a neglected postern, through which he might speak to Nina. He found means to acquaint her with it, and she did not fail to take advantage of the information. It was easy for him to come to the place of rendezvous by narrow, unfrequented paths through the forest, known to him alone. This was at first an alleviation to the two lovers, and for some time they enjoyed it with transport. But to converse without seeing each other ! to love without the means of showing it ! not to be allowed a single embrace ! always to be in fear of being discovered, and ever to be separated ! Godfrey could not endure his condition. He resolved then to get out of it by one bold attempt, and went to the castle to declare his mind to the father, and to obtain of him a decisive answer.

"Sir," said he, "I have a favour to request. Deign to listen to me for a moment. I love your daughter ; my happiness entirely depends upon her ; and I must venture to ask of you her hand. You know my name and birth ; I flatter myself that I am entitled to your esteem, and not in every respect unworthy of Nina. I request your answer, which I shall consider as my sentence either of life or death." "I am not surprised," answered the old gentleman, "that any one should love my daughter. She is young, handsome, and discreet ; her birth is distinguished ; she is my sole heiress ; and if she

continues to preserve my goodwill, she will at my decease be entitled to a considerable fortune. With all her recommendations, I think no lord in France need be ashamed to marry her. Many gentlemen have been here to solicit me on that subject : but I am in no haste ; I shall wait a suitable match ; and, above all, shall have nothing to do with those knights who, like their falcons, have nothing but what they catch to live on."

Godfrey was so confused that he could make no answer, but went to give utterance to his sensations in the forest, and to wait till it should be time to repair to the postern. Nina was punctual to the appointed hour ; and she came there only to join her grief to that of her lover. "Receive my last farewell," said the knight. "I have done with this country : there is no longer any happiness or good in it, since I cannot possess you. Cursed be riches which snatch from me the only object of my love !" "Alas !" replied Nina, "all the satisfaction I promised myself in the enjoyment of them was in bestowing them on you ; and am I also condemned to curse them ! But, Godfrey, let us not yet despair : we have still a resource, which love long since suggested to me. You have not far hence, at Medot, an old uncle of about my father's age. If he has a regard for you, as I cannot doubt, go and intrust him with the secret of your love. He has assuredly loved in his youth, and will have compassion for us. Tell him that he

may be the author of your happiness and mine, that all we require of him is a simulated service—only to make a grant to you for a few days of a part of his estate, to the value of three hundred livres; and that he may then come and ask my father to grant you my hand. His friendship, I am sure, will obtain it; and as soon as we are united in marriage, we will resign what his bounty may induce him to make over to us.” “I had given up all hope,” said Godfrey; “but your advice makes me breathe again.”

He went immediately to his uncle, whom he entreated to employ the interest he had with the young lady's father in his behalf, without, however, intimating that the attachment was mutual. “Your choice is praiseworthy,” said the uncle. “I know your mistress; she is really enchanting. You may make yourself easy; for I will undertake to obtain her for you, and will this moment go to her father for that very purpose.” He then mounted his horse, and rode to the old lord's castle. Godfrey, on the other hand, set out, transported with joy, for Galardon, where a tournament was announced that was to last for two days. During the whole journey the amorous knight could think of nothing but the happiness he was about to enjoy, little imagining what a base project had been formed to betray him.

His uncle was as usual heartily welcomed at the father's. They sat down to table, and drinking to

each other, began to relate their youthful exploits in love and arms. But when the tables were uncovered, and the servants had withdrawn, "My good old friend," said the Lord of Medot, "I am a bachelor, and begin to be tired of a single life. You are going to marry your daughter, when you will also find the inconvenience of solitude. Hear a proposal that I have to make to you. Grant me Nina for a wife; I will settle on her all my property, and will come and reside here with you for the remainder of my days." This proposal delighted the father. After embracing his old son-in-law that was to be, he sent for his daughter, to whom he announced the agreement they had just made.

The consternation of the girl may be easily imagined. She returned to her chamber only to give vent to her tears, to imprecate a thousand curses on the perfidy of the uncle, and to call for succour on her unhappy lover. All this time he was toiling to deserve her by his glorious exploits at Galardon, and was far from conceiving his uncle to be capable of so base an action as to betray him, and to deprive him at once of his mistress and his fortune. In the evening Nina ran to the postern gate, for she knew not that Godfrey had gone to the tournament; but having waited for him a long time in vain, she concluded that he had forsaken her.

The nuptials were appointed by the old gentle-

man to be celebrated the next day but one ; and the son-in-law required that it should take place in his Castle of Medot. It was consequently settled that, in order to arrive there betimes, they should set out at break of day ; and in the meanwhile the father and son-in-law sent into the neighbourhood to invite their friends—that is, all of their own age who were still alive. The following day arrived, one after another, a troop of old decrepit people, wrinkled, bald-headed, and paralytic. Never was such a bridal party seen. •You would have thought that it was a congregation of persons come to take leave of each other before their departure to the other world.

The day was consumed in preparing the dress and ornaments for the unhappy bride. She was within ready to burst with grief, which she was however obliged to suppress, and to cover with the external appearance of cheerful acquiescence. The father came occasionally to see how the work went on. In one of these visits he was asked by somebody whether he had thought of ordering a sufficient number of horses to carry to Medot all the persons that were to go in the cavalcade. “The men,” said he, “have those on which they came. Those that are in my stables will serve ; but at all events, to obviate disappointment, let some be sent for and borrowed of my nearest neighbours.” A servant was instantly despatched with this commission.

The man recollected as he went that Godfrey had a capital grey horse, reckoned one of the first in the province. The fellow thought himself sure of gaining the goodwill of his mistress if he could mount her so handsomely for the ceremony, and he accordingly went to the knight's house to borrow it.

Godfrey meanwhile, after obtaining the prize at the tournament, had gone to his uncle's to learn the success of his application; but not finding him at home, he imagined that the old gentleman was detained by some difficulty started by the father, and returned home so easy in his mind, and so full of confidence in the promise of his relative, that in coming into his house he ordered a minstrel to be brought to amuse him with some love-songs. He flattered himself that his uncle would take a pleasure in coming personally to announce his good fortune, and in this fond expectation his eyes were continually directed towards the gate.

Suddenly he perceives one coming. This was the servant who, saluting the knight, asked him in the name of his master for the loan of his fine grey palfrey for the morrow. "Oh! with all my heart," answered Godfrey; "and for a longer time, if he wants it. But what occasion has he for the horse?" "Sir, it is to carry my lady Nina to Medot." "Your lady! and what is she going to do at Medot?" "To be married. Why, don't you know that your uncle has demanded her hand

of my lord, and that they are to be married to-morrow morning?"

At these words the knight was petrified with astonishment. He could not at first believe such black treachery, and made the servant a second time assure him of the fact. Unfortunately for him, the offenders were beyond the reach of his vengeance. He walked about for some time in silence, with his eyes cast on the ground and full of fury. At length he stopped on a sudden, called his squire, ordered him to saddle the grey horse, and to deliver it to the servant. "She shall mount it," said he to himself; "and in mounting it she will at least bestow another thought on me. Shall not I be happy to contribute to her pleasure? But no! I accuse her falsely. They have certainly constrained her; and she is no less to be pitied than myself. It is I who have her heart; and whilst I live, mine is devoted to her."

The knight then called all his people, distributed among them the little money he had, and told them that they were that instant at liberty to quit his service. They, in the utmost agitation, entreated him to let them know in what particular they had been so unfortunate as to incur his displeasure, "I am entirely satisfied with you all," answered he, "and I wish it were in my power to make you a better recompense for your services: but life is now a burden to me; farewell, begone, and let me die! The poor servants threw themselves

in tears at his feet, and implored him to suffer them at least to remain with him, to alleviate his misfortunes. He left them without an answer, and went to shut himself up in his chamber.

By this time they were at rest in the father's castle. In order to rise betimes, they had gone soon to bed, and the watch had orders to ring the alarum at break of day. Nina alone could not enjoy repose. The moment that was to begin her misery approached, and she found herself now without resource. Twenty times in the course of the day had the unfortunate maid sought the means of escaping. No danger would have deterred her, had it been possible to make the attempt ; but she had too many eyes to deceive ; and she had therefore no remedy but patient resignation, no consolation but her tears.

Towards midnight the moon rose. The sentinel, who had been carousing a little overnight, and had in consequence fallen asleep, awaking suddenly, and seeing a very great light, thought the day was considerably advanced, and hastened to give the signal. All immediately began to rise, and the servants to saddle the horses. The grey palfrey, as the handsomest, was destined for the young lady. At the sight of it she could not dissemble her grief, but burst into tears. They did not pay much attention to this circumstance, attributing her affliction to the regret she felt at leaving her father's house. But when the time came for her to mount the horse,

she absolutely refused, and they were obliged by force to place her upon the saddle. At last they set out. First marched the servants, male and female ; then the gentry who were to be present at the nuptials ; and after them the bride who, in no great haste to get to her journey's end, kept in the rear of the cavalcade. She was entrusted to the care of an old knight, a man of prudence and good repute, who was to give her away at the nuptials. These two closed the procession.

To arrive at Medot they had three leagues to go through the forest by a cross road so narrow, that two horses could with difficulty walk abreast. This obliged them to make a long file. For the first half-league they jogged on pleasantly enough ; but the old people, who had not taken their usual rest, were soon overtaken by drowsiness. It was laughable to see their hoary heads bobbing from one side to another, and dropping forward on the necks of their horses.

The bride followed, too much overwhelmed with sorrow to observe them. Like a criminal led to execution, who by every trifling pretext for delay strives to spin out a few moments of existence, she checked now and then the progress of her horse. Thus they had not proceeded a league before she was, without intending it, separated from the rest of the cavalcade. Her old guide was no more aware of it than herself, as he was taking an opportunity of finishing his nap like the others. Never-

theless, he sometimes half-opened his eyes ; but as he always saw the grey palfrey before him, they quickly closed again, as it were by instinct. As for the horses, they had no occasion for the guidance of their riders ; in such a road they could not lose themselves.

There was, however, a spot where the road divided into two branches. The one was a continuation of that to Medot, the other a byroad to Godfrey's. All the horsemen in the troop of course proceeded in the first of these, and the old man's beast followed the track of the rest. As for the grey palfrey, since he had of late carried his master from the postern gate, he had been so accustomed to the other path, that he naturally pursued it.

Before one could get from that place to Godfrey's, it was necessary to ford a small rivulet. At the noise made by the horse in stepping into the water, Nina was roused from her melancholy reverie. She calls her escort to her assistance, but sees nobody. Finding herself alone in a forest at such an early hour, she at first shivered with an emotion of terror ; but the idea of escaping the evil with which she was threatened soon overpowered her fear, and she pushed the horse boldly into the brook, resolved rather to perish than bear the consummation of those hateful nuptials. But there was nothing to apprehend. The horse, according to his usual custom, crossed the ford, and speedily arrived in safety at his master's house.

As soon as the sentinel perceived the lady, he sounded his horn to give the alarm, and then came himself to ask, through the wicket of the drawbridge, what was her pleasure. "Open the gate quickly," said the damsel, "and give refuge to a woman who is pursued by robbers." The man looked through the wicket and saw a young lady of very handsome mien, covered with a rich scarlet mantle. The dress, the beauty of the damsel, the grey horse that she rode, which appeared to him his master's palfrey, astonished him so as to make him believe it was some friendly fairy whom compassion for his master's sorrow had brought to comfort him. He ran immediately to inform Godfrey of this extraordinary incident.

Godfrey had passed the night in the most heart-rending anguish ; but when he heard a lady was at his gate, he went instantly through courtesy to receive her, and let down the drawbridge. What unexpected joy, what unlooked-for happiness, to behold his mistress! She rushed into his arms, crying out to him to save her, at the same time looking back with terror, as if she had really been pursued by ravishers. "Compose yourself," said he, "and take courage ; I hold you secure in my arms, and from this moment no power on earth shall tear you from me." He then called his people, to whom he gave his several orders, and raised the drawbridge. But that was not all. To secure and improve his good fortune, he judged it necessary

immediately to espouse Nina; and for that purpose having sent for his chaplain, he conducted her to the altar. Hilarity then resumed the place of melancholy in the castle. Master and servants, all were equally intoxicated with joy; never did transport so rapidly succeed despair.

It was far otherwise at Medot. All had arrived there except the damsel and her guardian. In vain were they inquired for; no one knew how they were separated, nor what had happened to detain them. Her companion at length appeared, still nodding upon his horse, and was greatly astonished when they awoke him at having missed his ward. As it was conjectured that she must have lost her way in the forest, several of the servants were sent in pursuit of her. But all their doubts and apprehensions were soon cleared up by the presence of a messenger from Godfrey, who announced the safe arrival of the lady at his master's castle, and in his name invited thither the uncle and all the company that was to have been present at the marriage. They accordingly repaired with expedition to the castle of Godfrey, who met them at his gate, holding by the hand his new spouse, whom he presented to them under that title.

This at first excited a loud murmur throughout the troop. But when Godfrey had entreated their attention, and related to them all the circumstances of his courtship up to the adventure of the palfrey, the scene was entirely changed. Those veterans,

grown grey in the principles of honour and fidelity, even showed some indignation at being made the accomplices of so base a perfidy ; and they all went in a body to press the father to ratify the union of the two lovers. The old lord found it impossible to withhold his assent, and the nuptials were celebrated at Godfrey's. The uncle died within the year, and the knight succeeded to the inheritance of Medot. Soon after, his father-in-law also died, when he became one of the richest lords in Champagne, and lived with his wife happy and respected.

AUBEREA.

A CITIZEN of Compiègne, a man of respectability and in affluent circumstances, had a son much addicted to expense and irregular pleasures. Their house was contiguous to that of a poor man who had nothing to boast of but a very pretty daughter. The young libertine, being struck with the beauty of the girl, cultivated an intimacy with his neighbour in hope of seducing the daughter. He courted and made love to her for a long time ; but she did not want prudence, and always replied to his solicitations, "Sir, I shall never love any one but a husband : it depends upon yourself whether you will purchase my affections upon these terms ; for you have my entire concurrence, and I declare to you that I should prefer you to all others." The amorous youth wished nothing more ardently ; but he was apprehensive that his father would not consent, and that apprehension was well founded. The old man, indeed, judging the match ineligible, commanded his son not to think of it.

In this situation of affairs, a merchant of the town, who by the death of his wife had become a

widower, came to solicit the girl's hand, and soon after married her. I leave you to conceive the chagrin of the young citizen on the occasion. He complained ; he wept ; he endeavoured by all means to circumvent the marriage ; cursed his father's fortune ; but at last, when he found it was impossible to prevent it, he consoled himself as well as he could under the disappointment, and thought of nothing further than obtaining from the matron what he had before sought from the maid. He accordingly dressed himself in the gayest manner, and went to pay a visit to the newly-married lady. But she received him so ill, and desired him in so discouraging a manner not to come again to her house, that he gave up all hope of attaining his object.

Vexed at the reception he had met with, and agitated with disappointed passion, he went to compose himself in a neighbouring house that belonged to an old milliner of his acquaintance, whose name was Auberea. She, observing him pale and trembling, asked him what was his disorder? He, in answer, related to the old woman the particulars of his amour, and declared that he could not live without the possession of his charming mistress.

Now this Auberea at an intrigue was the most notable woman in existence. There was no man, however sagacious, that she could not lead with a string, if once she attempted it. "What!" said she to the youth, "does so trifling a matter make you

miserable? My poor amorous friend, take courage; I'll engage that you shall soon have a private meeting with the lady, and her own jealous husband shall be the very person to procure you that satisfaction. But what will you give me?" The lover, in his transport at this assurance, promised fifty livres. "Go and bring them," replied Auberea. He went accordingly. "Now give me your great-coat," added she, "and retire; but keep yourself in readiness this night and the next, in case I should have to call you."

Her plans all arranged and settled in her head, Auberea watched from her window to see when the merchant should go out upon his business. No sooner did she perceive him clear of the threshold of his door than she put on her short mantle, rolled up the youth's greatcoat, put it in the form of a bundle under her arm, and went to wait upon the wife. "God be with you!" cried she, "my beauteous lady, and may he have mercy on her who is dead and gone. What a good-hearted creature it was! she was the idol of all in this part of the city. I could not pass by her door but she would cry out, 'Come in, Dame Auberea; walk in, I say.' Then would she offer me a chair, and make me chat with her. If ever I wanted anything I came at once to ask for it. It was all the same, she would have given me anything, even to her heart's blood. Ah! I have met with a great loss in her." "Don't weep on that account, neighbour,"

answered the wife. "What is it you are in want of? tell me." "I ask pardon for the liberty I take, my good lady; but since you are so kind, I must inform you that you have it in your power to restore life to me. For some time my daughter has been ill. She has heard talk of your nice white wine and small cakes; and for the last two days she has been plaguing me to procure some for her. I have till this moment declined coming, because I am not accustomed to trouble those with whom I am not acquainted. But what is one not capable of doing for a child? You will be sensible of that yourself some future day, my gentle neighbour." "You were to blame in not coming before, Dame Auberea. There is nothing that my husband and I would not have gladly spared for the relief of your daughter. But sit you down." "How truly you deserve all manner of happiness!" said Auberea, seating herself; "and I shall pray to God to grant it to you always. Indeed, my lady that is gone had every reason to be happy in her husband. He refused her nothing—money, dress, or trinkets. I, who now tell it you, knew all these circumstances well. For instance, thereabouts stood her bed."

In saying these words, Auberea enters further into the house. She inspects the apartments, examines the furniture, and desires to see the lady's wardrobe. A young married woman in such a case seldom requires much pressing. She displays al

her clothes before the old woman, then desires her to look at the bed. "There," said she, "is where my husband and I sleep." This was all Auberea wanted. In feeling the bed, to examine its quality, she thrusts in with great dexterity, and without being perceived, the rolled-up bundle, which she had kept concealed under her mantle. They continued to converse together for some little time longer. At last the milliner pretended to recollect herself, and to consider that her daughter would be impatient at her long absence. They gave her a bottle of wine, a roll, and a cake, with which she departed.

At night the husband returned, after having run from place to place on his business ; and being fatigued, he ordered supper immediately, that he might go to bed betimes. But scarcely had he got into bed before he felt something under his side that incommoded him. He raised himself up and groped, till he drew out the old woman's bundle. He turned pale at the sight. A dagger plunged into his breast that moment would hardly have forced out a drop of blood. He bolted the door to have leisure fully to examine the bundle, and found it to be a man's greatcoat. "I am betrayed !" then exclaimed he, in a piteous tone. "She loves another, and married me only for convenience !" He threw himself in an agony of grief upon the bed. A moment after he rises up and strides about distractedly ; then he stops short, to

consider what measures are proper to be taken. But the more he reflected the more he was puzzled. A thousand ideas, rising one upon another, assailed at once his troubled soul. At length his fury increased to such a degree that he went down-stairs, seized his wife by the arm, and turned her out of the house, after loading her with reproaches.

She was astonished to find herself at once, without having had time to say a word in her defence, at midnight in the street. She had not power to move a step, so great was her amazement. Auberea, who had foreseen what would probably happen, was upon the watch to wait the issue. She runs up to the wife, "What! is it you, my good lady? What are you seeking in the streets at this late hour? Has any accident happened?" "O my good friend, Auberea, how fortunate I am to meet you! and yet what a sad unaccountable misfortune has brought me here! My husband just now came home in a rage and drove me out, I know not wherefore. I am almost distracted. For God's sake, do me the favour to bear me company to my father's house!" "Have a care, what are you about?" replied the cunning crone: "it would be known in the town, and your adventure would make a fine piece of public scandal; besides, would you expose yourself to a bitter reprimand? That, you may be sure, is all you would get from your father. He would suppose you had been detected in an intrigue, and would send you back to

your husband. Take my word for it, this must be the effect of liquor ; come to my house while your husband sleeps off his debauch. To-morrow, when his head is in order, we will return together, and you will find he will not be sensible of what he has now been doing. As you have obliged me, it is but just that I should serve you in return."

Without waiting for an answer, Auberea then took the lady and conducted her to an inner chamber of her house. "Now," said she, "you are in perfect safety ; recover yourself while I go and provide something for your supper." "Oh no," answered the other, "I am choked with anguish ; it is impossible for me to swallow a morsel." Auberea, finding that her guest would take no refreshment, advised her at last to lie down. She at first refused, but at length, by force of argument and importunity, she was persuaded to undress herself and go to bed.

Scarcely was she disposed of there before the old woman ran to acquaint her young gallant with the incident. After the hopes that had been given him, he thought, as one may suppose, but little of sleep, but continued sitting in expectation at the window. "What news?" cried he. "Very good. The bird is caught." He then leaped down the stairs, four at a time, and hastened to Auberea's house.

What follows is but too easily conceived. The wife at first resists and threatens to alarm the neigh-

bourhood ; the young lover represents to her that if any should come and find her there, it would be a difficult matter to convince them of her innocence. He takes advantage of the surprise and trouble she is in. The new Lucretia yields ; but, less severe than the other, she at last forgives and embraces her subduer.

In the morning, when the bell rang for matins at the Abbey of St Corneille, Auberea entered the chamber of the two lovers. "Arise," said she to the young citizen, "and leave this place." "And why go out so soon? It is not yet broad daylight." "Come, obey me without hesitation, if you wish that I should again do you a service. And you, lady, must now think of returning to your husband ; it is my business to manage it : dress yourself and come along with me."

Auberea then went out with the young wife, whom she conducted to the church of the Abbey. There placing her on her knees in a corner, and lighting a wax taper near her, she put into her hands a large book, and desired her to continue in that posture till she should return. The old woman then ran to the husband. He had passed the whole night in walking up and down his room, and reflecting on the mishap which had given him so much trouble. He repented, however, having turned out his wife, and was continually listening in hope to hear her return. He no sooner heard a knock than he ran in haste to the door, and saw Auberea,

who told him that having had that night a terrible dream, and going to the Abbey to pray to God that he would avert the evil that threatened her, she there was surprised to find his wife in tears. "You must have very little feeling," said she, "to send to church at so early an hour a young creature so amiable and so pretty, whom you should rather oblige to lie in bed till the day was a little advanced, for the benefit of her health." "At the church!" cried the husband with astonishment, and at the same time not without satisfaction. "Madam Auberea, you surely are not in earnest?" "Yes, sir, she really is at church, and if you do not believe me, come there and satisfy your own eyes."

He went with her and found his wife in the posture in which Auberea had placed her, seeming to pray with great devotion. This edifying sight brought so sudden a calm within his breast that he took her by the hand, and after apologising to her by the avowal that he had the night before drunk rather too freely, he took her home along with him. Nevertheless, the circumstance of the greatcoat filled his mind with doubts which he could not solve, and with an uneasiness of which he could not get the better; and the whole morning he could not help thinking and puzzling himself about it.

That was the only point on which it remained for Auberea to triumph over the husband. She placed herself at her window, in the manner she

had done the day before, to watch when he went out. No sooner did she see him make his appearance in the street than she began to cry out in the most piteous tone, "Thirty-pence, O Christ! thirty-pence! I shall never recover it." In saying these words, she struck her breast, and wept as if her heart was breaking.

Hearing her cries, the merchant stopped to know the cause of her affliction. The cunning old creature, without seeming to see him, kept crying, "Thirty-pence, good God! where am I to find them? I am ruined; they will soon come and seize upon my effects: ah! this was the mischief my dream foreboded!"

These lamentations, which had the appearance of sincerity, excited the compassion and curiosity of the merchant. He went into the house, and pulling Auberea by the sleeve, asked her again what it was that so grievously affected her. "Sir," said she, "hear if I have not substantial cause. Yesterday a young man brought me a greatcoat; some of the furred border required stitching, and I was to have returned it to him this morning. I immediately began to work at it, but having occasion to go out, I took it with me, that I might not lose time or disappoint the owner, and I have been so unlucky as to leave it in some place or other, but where I cannot possibly guess. The youth to whom it belonged has just been here to demand it; and as I could not return it to him, he threat-

ened to prosecute me unless I pay him thirty-pence, at which he values it. Thirty-pence, neighbour ! Think what a sum it is for me to raise. Alas ! if I cannot find the 'coat it will be best for me to go at once and drown myself in the river." "Tell me, good Auberea," replied the merchant, "were you not yesterday at my house ?" "Yes, sir ; at the same time your wife was making her bed, and now I recollect that she made me sit down by the bedside and chat with her a few minutes. The greatcoat was a green one, and trimmed with squirrel-skin ; you may recognise it by a seam just begun, and by my needle and thimble, which will be found in it."

Never did joy equal what the merchant felt on receiving this information. He fully recollected that the greatcoat was green and trimmed with fur ; and all that remained to make him the happiest man on the earth was the evidence of the needle and thimble. This he immediately went to verify, and it completed his conviction of his wife's innocence. Thus all four were rendered happy ; but which was most so, I leave you to conjecture.

AUCASSIN AND NICOLETTE.

THE Count Bongars of Valence had for the space of ten years waged a bloody war against Garins, Count of Beaucaire. Constantly at the very gates of his city, with a hundred knights and a thousand men-at-arms, did Bongars ravage and lay waste the country. Garins, old and infirm, could no longer put himself at the head of his vassals. Aucassin, his son, might have occupied his place with glory : he was a young man of great comeliness and strength ; but love, that subdues all, had overpowered him, and had so entirely engaged his mind that he would hear neither of tournaments nor battles.

Often did his parents say to him, " Go, dearest son, take a horse and arms, and succour your people. With you at their head they will with more ardent courage defend their walls, their homes, and their lives." " Father," Aucassin would answer, " I have already declared to you my fixed resolution. May God never grant my prayer if I gird on a sword, mount a horse, or take part either in a tournament or a combat, till you have agreed

to let me have Nicolette, my lovely mistress, the sole object of my care." "My good son," replied the father, "you require what I cannot think of granting. That girl is not worthy of you. The Viscount of Beaucaire, my vassal, who bought her when an infant of the Saracens, and who at her baptism deigned to be her sponsor, will marry her some future day to one of her own rank, to some slave obliged to subsist by his labour. For your part, if you want a consort, I can procure you one of princely birth. Cast your eyes round France, and make your option: there is not a sovereign lord who will not be happy to grant you his daughter, if we demand her." "Ah! my father," rejoined Aucassin, "to what principality or kingdom on earth would not my charming Nicolette be an ornament?"

The father insisted, and the Countess enjoined her entreaties and her threats to those of the Count her husband; but all the answer they could get was, "My Nicolette is so charming; her beauty and her kindness have so wholly engaged my heart, that I can neither enjoy authority nor life without her."

When the Count Garins saw that he could not wean his son's affections from Nicolette, he went to the Viscount his vassal, to desire that she might be banished from his dominions. The Viscount, who feared the resentment of Garins, engaged that she should be sent into a country so remote that

she would never be heard of more. But he felt within himself a compunction that would not allow him to punish innocence, and to treat an un-offending virgin with so much cruelty. He, besides, had an affection for her ; and instead of sending her into exile as he had promised, he thought it enough to conceal her under his own care.

At the extremity of his palace there was a lonely chamber, lighted only by a small window that looked into the garden. It was there that he resolved to shut up Nicolette. He was careful to provide her with every necessary of life, and all the indulgence her confinement could afford ; but at the same time he allotted her for a guardian an old dame, who was made responsible for the maid, and charged not to lose sight of her.

Nicolette had beautiful fair locks, that waved in natural ringlets. Her eyes were blue and lively ; her teeth small, white, and regular ; and her face was admirably well proportioned. Her waist was but a span in circumference. Her complexion resembled the rose in the morning ; her lips the cherry in summer ; and the two little orbs that swelled out under her robe tarnished the colour of the snow. In short, there never was seen a more exquisite production of nature.

The poor orphan, when shut up in this prison, found her only consolation in going to the window. She cast her eyes upon the garden, where the

flowers were blowing and the birds singing, and exclaimed piteously, "Unhappy creature that I am! Here, then, am I enclosed for ever! Aucassin! I know it is because I love you! But it is in vain they torment me; never shall they work a change in my heart!"

As soon as Nicolette disappeared from Beaucraire, all were anxious to know the cause. Some averred that she had fled; others, that Count Garins had caused her to be put to death. However it might affect others, Aucassin was ready to expire with the excess of his affliction. He went to the Viscount and inquired for his mistress. "I have lost what was dearest to me on earth," said he. "Is it by you that I am deprived of it? If I cannot survive the loss, you must be responsible; for you will have been the cause of my death, in snatching from me that for which alone I cared to live!"

The Viscount, with the design to shame him out of his passion, at first spoke contemptuously of the girl as an unknown slave, who would soon give him cause for repentance if, with his pretensions to the daughters of sovereign princes, he should take her to his bed. But when he saw Aucassin's passion rise into rage, he was obliged to screen himself by avowing the orders he had received from Count Garins. "Form your resolution," said he; "renounce Nicolette for ever; for you will never see her more. Above all, let your father be per-

suaded that you have banished her from your mind ; otherwise, I know not to what extremity his anger may carry him. Perhaps you may even cause her death and mine at the hands of your father." "You drive me to despair," answered Aucassin ; and without saying another word he withdrew, leaving the Viscount in no less trouble than himself. On his return to the palace, he went to his chamber, to have leisure to give himself up to his grief ; there he remained overwhelmed with a load of sorrow, and refusing every kind of comfort.

But while he was in this distraction on account of his separation from his mistress, the Count of Bongars, who wanted to put an end at once to the war, had come with his troops to assault the Castle of Beaucaire. The knights and warriors of the town had taken the alarm and ran to the gates and ramparts to defend themselves, while the citizens from the battlements poured down a shower of darts and pointed stakes. But a chief was wanted to animate and command the combatants.

The Count ran distracted to his son's chamber. "Poltroon as thou art, wilt thou quietly sit by and see thy father stripped of all his possessions ? what will remain for thee, after this castle is taken ? My son, mount your horse, go and join my vassals in defence of your inheritance. If you should not have even the courage to fight with them, your presence alone will augment their valour, and will

enable them to conquer." "Father," answered the youth, "spare yourself the trouble of making remonstrances that can be of no avail. I once more repeat my declaration; and I call upon the vengeance of God, if I go into battle, either to give or receive a blow, till you grant me Nicolette." "Son," replied the Count, "I would rather sacrifice all." On saying which he retired.

Aucassin ran after him to call him back. "Well, father," said he, "accept a proposal. I will take up arms and go out to battle on condition that you promise, if I return alive, to let me have another interview with Nicolette. I only require to speak a few words with her, and to exchange a kiss." "Let it be so," answered the Count; "I give you my word for the performance." Aucassin then ordered arms to be brought to him, and mounting a horse full of mettle, with a helmet on his head and lance in hand, he advanced to one of the gates and sallied out of it.

The joyful expectation of seeing soon his charming Nicolette, and the idea, above all, of the promised kiss, had so filled his mind with pleasure that he was transported beyond himself. His thoughts being solely engaged on her, he moved forward without consulting either his ears or eyes, and spurred his horse with such animation that he quickly carried him into the midst of the enemy's squadrons. It was not till he was surrounded on all sides, till they cried, "That is the young Count

Aucassin," and till he found his shield and his lance wrested from him, that he recovered his senses. He then made a vigorous effort to disengage himself from his adversaries. He unsheathed his sword, which he plied manfully on the right and left, cut off the heads and arms of his opponents, and, like a wild boar beset by dogs in the forest, opened himself a passage covered with blood. At length, after having killed or wounded seventeen knights, he made his way through the enemy's ranks, and pushing on at full speed, regained the city.

Count Bongars, hearing the cries that announced the capture of Aucassin, had made haste to partake of the triumph. Aucassin in his retreat recognised the Count, and gave him so violent a blow with his sword upon the helmet that he unhorsed him. He then seized and dragged him into the city, to present him as a prisoner to his father. "Sire," said he, "here is the enemy who for the space of ten years has given you so much alarm." "Ah! my son," answered the father, "it is thus at your age a youth should signalise himself, and not by silly amours." "Father," replied Aucassin, "no reflections, I entreat you; I have discharged my engagement: now think of performing yours." "What, my dear son?" "What! did you not make me a solemn promise, that if I would go out to the battle, I should once more see and exchange a kiss with Nicolette? If you do not recollect the

engagement, I for my part have not forgotten it." "May I die instantly if I agree to it! I would rather, were she in my power this moment, throw her before your face into the flames." "Father, is that your final resolution?" "Yes, by Heavens!" "Indeed, I am much concerned to find you capable of such a breach of honour." Then turning to Bongars, "Count of Valence," said he, "are you not my prisoner?" "Most assuredly, sir." "Then give me your hand, and make a solemn oath never to omit an occasion during life to hurt and disgrace my father." "Sir, I am your prisoner, and you may require for my ransom what you please. Demand gold, silver, horses, dogs, furs, either white or grey: I will engage for all; but cease, I pray you, to treat me with mockery and insult." "I will have no reply, no gainsaying," answered Aucassin, "either comply with my requisition, or die this moment by my sword."

Bongars, terrified at this menace, made no further resistance, but took all the oaths required; after which his conqueror conducted him to one of the gates and set him at liberty. But all that Aucassin acquired by his achievement was the Count's order to be arrested and imprisoned in the tower.

Nicolette continued in her confinement strictly watched. One night, being unable to compose her eyes to sleep, she perceived the moon shining with prodigious brightness in the firmament, and

heard the nightingale's plaintive notes resound in the garden ; for it was in that pleasant time of the year when the days are long and the nights serene. Her thoughts were then engaged on Aucassin her lover, and the persecution she suffered from Count Garins. The old woman appointed to guard her was at that moment asleep, and Nicolette thought the opportunity favourable for her escape. She rose without noise, put her silken mantle upon her shoulders, and fixing her sheets tied together to the sash of the window, she used them as a rope and slipped down into the garden. By the light of the moon she discerned the garden gate, which she opened, and obliged to cross the town in her flight, she arrived under the very tower in which her lover was confined.

This tower was ancient, and had crevices open in several places. The maid, as she passed along, fancied she heard a person complaining, and applying her ear to one of those openings, she knew the voice to be that of Aucassin, who was lamenting his hapless love. When she had listened for some time, "Aucassin," said she, "gallant bachelor, why weep and lament in vain ? I am hateful to your father and your family ; we cannot meet and live together ; adieu ! I am going to cross the seas, and to hide myself in a far distant country." On saying which she cut off a lock of her hair and threw it into the tower. The lover received the gift with transport. He kissed it in raptures, and

then concealed it in his bosom. But what Nicolette had just announced to him filled him with despair. "My charmer," he cried, "you must not leave me, unless you mean to doom me to destruction."

The sentinel posted upon the tower overheard their discourse, and pitied them. All at once he descried at the further end of the street the soldiers coming their rounds, with drawn swords under their cloaks. "She will be discovered and arrested," said he to himself; "what a pity that so beautiful a damsel should perish! Alas! Aucassin, my prince, will also suffer." The charitable sentinel would fain have warned Nicolette fully of her danger, but that the soldiers should not discover it, he could not do it otherwise than by a song apposite to the occasion.

The fair one easily divined the meaning of the song; and after breathing out an acknowledgment to the kind sentinel, she wrapped herself up in her mantle, and favoured by the shadow of a post, hid herself in an angle of the tower, so that the soldiers passed by without observing her. When they had got to a distance she bade adieu to her lover, and approached the walls of the town to seek a passage for her escape. She was terrified, at first looking over, with the sight of a very deep ditch; but the danger that already threatened her from the anger of Count Garins overcame all lesser apprehensions: so, after commending herself to God,

she slipped down into the moat. Her delicate hands and tender feet, not used to such encounters, were wounded in several places. Nevertheless, her fears made her insensible to the pain. But to have reached the bottom of the ditch was not enough; it was necessary to climb the other bank, and here lay the difficulty. Her good fortune, however, directed her to one of those sharp-pointed stakes that had been hurled by the defenders of the town upon the enemy in the late assault. This she employed to dig her way, first advancing with one foot and then another, till at length, with much pain and labour, she reached the summit.

At twice the distance of a bow-shot from the ditch was the border of the forest, about one-and-twenty leagues in extent each way, and full of all sorts of venomous and ravenous animals. Nicolette durst not enter it through fear of being devoured. On the other hand, as she was in imminent danger of being apprehended and carried back to prison, she ventured to conceal herself in a small thicket on the edge of the wood. There, fatigued and exhausted, she lay down and slept till the morning, when some shepherds were driving their flocks to the adjacent meadows.

Whilst the animals fed on the borders of the forest, the shepherds went and sat down by a stream that winded round it. There, spreading on the earth a cloak, they put their provisions down and began their breakfast. Nicolette, whom the noise

awakened, approached them, and saluting them courteously, inquired if they knew Aucassin, son of Garins, Count of Beaucaire. They answered in the affirmative ; but the instant they cast their eyes upon her, they were dazzled by her charms, and took her for some fairy that frequented the wood. She continued : “ My friends, I desire that you will go and tell him that there is here a white doe, for which he would readily give five hundred marks in gold, or indeed all the gold in the world, if it was at his disposal ; that he is desired to come and catch her, and that she is endowed with the virtue to cure him of all evils ; but that unless he comes within three days, he will never find her, and may renounce for ever all hope of cure.” She then opened her purse and gave them some money, which they accepted ; not undertaking to go to the town on purpose to acquaint Aucassin with what she desired, but promising to do it if they should fall in with him, to which she assented, and retired.

Charmed with the hope she had received, she thought of nothing from that moment but the reception she should give her lover. For that purpose she constructed near the road a small arbour, made of green branches, with which, at the same time, she was desirous of trying him. “ If his love is as violent as he declares, when he sees this it will arrest his attention.” When the arbour was completed, and decked with fragrant flowers and

herbs, the fair one stepped aside a few paces and sat down behind a thicket to see what Aucassin would do on his arrival.

He had been liberated from his imprisonment. The Viscount was no sooner informed of the escape of his ward than he went, in order to allay any suspicions of the Count his sovereign, to inform him that she had died in the night; and Garins, freed in consequence of her supposed death from his apprehensions, restored Aucassin to liberty. He even took it into his head, for the consolation of his son, to give an entertainment to all his barons and vassals. The court assembled was numerous, and there was a variety of amusements; but Aucassin could taste no pleasure in the absence of his love. Plunged in the deepest melancholy, he kept himself apart from the company, leaning sorrowfully against a pillar. A knight coming up to him said, "Sir, I have been sick like you, and of the same malady; I am therefore qualified to offer you my advice upon the subject. Get on horseback and ride along the edge of the forest; the singing of the birds, the freshness of the verdure, the beauty of the flowers, or something else, perhaps, may afford you relief." Aucassin thanked him, and immediately withdrawing himself from the hall, and ordering his horse to be saddled, he rode out and proceeded towards the forest.

The shepherds were sitting in the same place as in the morning, close by the margin of the stream.

They had purchased two large cakes, which they had come to eat, spreading their cloaks, as before, upon the grass. "Comrades," said one whose name was Lucas, "God preserve our gentle Count Aucassin, and the damsel of the flaxen locks, to whose bounty we are indebted for these cakes." Aucassin, overhearing this, suspected that his lovely Nicolette had been with them. He accosted them, and gave them money to tempt them to a further explanation. When he asked them the meaning of what had just been spoken, the most intelligent of the band recounted the adventure of the morning, with the message they were charged to deliver to him, and the story of the white doe which he was invited to pursue. "God grant me to find it," said he, and entered the wood. His clothes, torn at every step by thorns and briars, were quickly reduced almost to tatters. His hands, his arms, his body, were so lacerated in a short time that he might have been traced by his blood. But his mind was so occupied with the thoughts of Nicolette that he was not sensible of any pain or inconvenience.

Thus did he pass the remainder of the day in a fruitless search. When the darkness of the night came on, he was obliged to desist for a while ; but soon after, the moon breaking out with splendour, he continued his progress. At length his good fortune led him to the arbour which the fair damsel had constructed.

At sight of the flowers with which the arbour was decorated, he said to himself, "Surely my Nicolette has been here, and it must be she that with her beauteous hands raised that green hut. For her sake I will pass the night in it." Instantly he dismounted from his horse; but such was his eagerness and precipitation, that he fell down and dislocated his shoulder. Notwithstanding this accident, he contrived with the other arm to fasten his horse to a tree. He then entered the arbour, and without thinking of his sufferings, he exclaimed, in amorous transport, "Happy flowers and branches that have been gathered by my charming Nicolette! how I envy your lot!"

The damsel was not far off, and overheard him. She ran to him with open arms and embraced him tenderly. "My Aucassin! have I again found you?" He on his part locked her in his arms, and almost smothered her with his embraces. "Ah, Nicolette, only just now my sufferings were painful, but now that I hold you I no longer feel them!" Nicolette, alarmed at what he said, asked him the cause of his pain. She felt his shoulder, and with the help of Heaven she contrived to set it in its right place. She then applied to it the juice of certain plants and herbs, of which she was acquainted with the virtues, and bound it with a piece of her dress.

His hurt being thus healed, she asked him what were his intentions. "Your father," said she,

“when informed of your flight, will, you may be assured, by break of day send in pursuit of you persons who will beat the forest. If you are found, I know not what will be the consequence ; but for my own part I am aware that I shall be put to a cruel death.” “I shall take measures to prevent it,” answered the youth ; and mounting his horse, he took up his mistress in his arms and carried her off, kissing successively her forehead, her eyes, and her mouth. She asked whither he was going. “I know not,” answered he ; “nor do I think it of much import where I go, since I have you along with me.”

After having traversed mountains and valleys, and passing through several towns and villages, they arrived at the sea-shore. Aucassin perceived some merchants in their vessels under sail. He made a signal, on which they let down their boat, and he obtained a passage for himself and his mistress.

A dreadful storm arising obliged them soon to take shelter in the port of Torlore. In this city Aucassin resided three years, completely happy in the possession of his Nicolette. But a Saracen fleet came to disturb this repose. They attacked the castle, captured it, pillaged the town, and carried off the inhabitants, taking with them the two lovers into captivity. The damsel was conveyed into one vessel, and the youth, bound hand and foot, into another.

Suddenly a fresh gale arose and separated the fleet. The vessel that bore Aucassin, tossed about from coast to coast, at last was driven into Beaucaire. The inhabitants, running to the shore, were happily surprised in the arrival of their young Count. His father and mother had both died during his absence. They therefore acknowledged him as their liege lord, and conducted him in pomp to the castle, where he took possession of his sovereignty, and where he had nothing to regret but the loss of Nicolette.

The vessel in which she was taken belonged to the King of Carthage, who had come on that expedition with twelve sons, all kings as well as himself. Ravished with her beauty, the young princes treated her with respect, and often asked the name of her parents and her country. "I am ignorant of it," answered she. "All I know is that I was taken away from my parents at a very early age and sold by Saracens." But on her entrance into Carthage, what was her surprise to recognise the walls and streets of the place in which she had been brought up! That of the King was not inferior when, by some circumstances which she related, he found she was his own daughter. He threw his arms around her, and was dissolved in tears of joy. The princes embraced her, and overwhelmed her with caresses. A few days after they proposed to her the son of a Saracen king for her husband; but she would not espouse a Saracen,

and thought only of the means of recovering her lover, whose image occupied her mind perpetually.

With this intention she learned to play on the violin. As soon as she had acquired it sufficiently, she made her escape at night from the palace and went to the sea-shore, where she took up her abode with a poor woman. There, in order to disguise herself, she stained her hands and face with the juice of an herb ; she then put on a youth's apparel, and obtained leave of a mariner who was bound for Provence to go on board his vessel. The voyage was prosperous. Nicolette disembarked with her violin, and in the guise of a minstrel went playing through the country till she arrived at Beaucaire.

Aucassin, at the moment of her arrival, was sitting with his barons on the steps before his palace. He looked towards the wood, where some years before he had fallen in with his beloved Nicolette, and the recollection drew forth a sigh. She approached, and without appearing to know him, "My lords," said she, "would you wish to hear the loves of the accomplished Aucassin and Nicolette his mistress?" All having testified the most anxious desire, she took out of a case her violin, and accompanying it with her voice, recounted how Nicolette loved Aucassin, how she escaped from prison, how they met in the forest, with all the particulars of their joint adventures to

the time of their separation, and of her own to her arrival at Carthage. During the whole of her song Aucassin was almost transported. His heart was so oppressed that it was with difficulty he could draw breath. When she had finished he took aside the pretended minstrel, and asked if he knew this Nicolette of whom he had been singing. Our minstrel answered he had seen her at Carthage, and that she was the most faithful lover, the most constant and loyal that ever existed. She then related the manner in which Nicolette was discovered by the King her father, and all the trouble she had suffered on account of the proposed marriage. "I beg, my good friend," said Aucassin, "that you will return to her, and tell her from me that if I had known what country had the happiness to contain her, I should quickly have flown to her relief. Tell her that I have been continually in the most anxious expectation of her, and that I have sworn never to espouse any other woman. Go, and if you can prevail on her to come and give me her hand, you shall receive in recompense as much gold and silver as you can demand or I can give."

On the pretended minstrel's promise to use his utmost efforts to execute his commission with effect, Aucassin presented him beforehand with twenty marks of silver. The damsel withdrew; but in turning her head to take a parting look at her lover, she perceived his cheeks bedewed with

tears. Her heart melted at the sight. She came back to desire that he would take courage, and assured him that in a very short time, sooner perhaps than he himself expected, he should see once more his beloved mistress.

On leaving the Count's palace, Nicolette repaired to that of the Viscount of Beaucaire. She found that he had died some time before, and demanded an audience of the widow, to whom she made herself known. This lady, who had brought up under her own inspection the charming infant, and had considered it as her own child, was overjoyed to see her, and provided her with apartments in the house. Nicolette, by means of an herb, got rid of the artificial black which she had assumed to disguise her countenance. In less than eight days, rest restored her to her pristine beauty. The Viscountess then apparelled her person in the most splendid and becoming dress, and seating her upon a couch covered with a rich silk damask, she went to seek Aucassin.

Since meeting with the minstrel he had passed his days and nights in incessant disquiet. The lady found him in tears when she entered. "Aucassin," said she, "you seem to be oppressed by sorrow; I am come to dissipate your grief, and show you what will convert it into joy; follow me." He followed her, full of anxiety and hope. The chamber door was opened, and presented to his delighted eyes the view of his enchanting Nicolette!

He was so enraptured as to be incapable of motion. Nicolette, springing from the couch, ran to his embraces. A thousand tender endearments ensued. The summons of the night could not separate them, and the morning dawned on their mutual caresses. At length, when a reasonable opportunity arrived, Aucassin conducted his mistress to the church, where he espoused her, and made her Countess of Beaucaire. Thus, after so many crosses and misfortunes, they found reparation in a permanent union. They preserved inviolate their reciprocal attachment, and passed a long and happy life together.

A WOMAN THAT MADE THRICE THE CIRCUIT OF THE CHURCH.

A YOUNG woman was married to a squire, either of Beausse or Berry, at present I do not recollect which. But what I remember well is, that she had an intrigue with the parson, and that she had so violent a regard for him that there was nothing, however difficult, that she would not readily undertake, if he required it, to prove her affection.

Thus, on her coming one day to church, the priest, after the service was over, begged her to meet him at night for some very important affair, as he said, in a certain shrubbery, which she agreed to without hesitation. What rendered it then more convenient for her was the husband being absent from home. As to the business the parson had with her, I can give you no account of it. I shall only tell you that their houses, built in the middle of a large thicket, were full a quarter of a league distant from each other; that about half-way between the two was the shrubbery, and that

it belonged to a servant of St Arnaud, prince of cuckolds.

In the evening, when the sun was down, and the parson thought he could slip out without being perceived, he went privately to the shrubbery, and there waited for the lady. She was preparing, on her part, to give him the meeting, when suddenly her husband entered the house, and by his unexpected return frustrated the rendezvous. Any other woman, doubtless, would have been disconcerted, and at a loss what to do ; but our heroine had no notion of forfeiting her word for such a trifling impediment, and, notwithstanding this unseasonable interruption, she got in readiness to keep her appointment.

The husband was fatigued and wet. Under pretence of not suffering him to wait in danger of getting cold, she served him with supper immediately ; and you may easily conceive she did not trifle away her time in preparing several dishes. "My dear," said she every moment, "you are tired ; let me advise you to eat but little. When one has walked a great way, repose is most wanted. Come and lie down ; take my advice, and do not go and dry yourself by the fire merely to sit up." She was so impatient to get rid of him that she would hardly allow him time to finish his meal, but almost snatched the victuals out of his mouth. At length, by preaching to him in the same strain, she so far prevailed on her good man that, flattered

with her care and attention, he suffered himself, though he had not half satisfied his hunger, to be conducted to bed.

He reckoned that his wife was going to lie down with him; but seeing that she did not begin to undress, he asked her the reason. "Sir," said she, "it is still time enough for me. You know that I am pressed to finish the cloth that I have been working. Go to sleep, while I go on with my work." "Surely the woman is possessed with the devil," replied the husband, in a discontented tone. "She has always something to do when I lie down, and then the next morning it is as difficult to rouse her."

Nevertheless, after grumbling a little longer, he crossed himself, and fell asleep. The wife, you may imagine, did not waste her time in watching him, but ran in haste to the shrubbery, where her friend waited for her, and where that important affair was so satisfactorily discussed that the time slipped away without their being aware of it.

About midnight the squire awaked, and, surprised not to find his wife by his side, called the chambermaid to know what was become of her. "She told me," answered the servant, "when she went out, that, not to lose time, she was going to finish her work at her godmother's." We need not doubt that the good man made a wry face when he learnt that his wife was out at so late an hour. He quickly put on his clothes and ran to the god-

mother's, who was fast asleep in bed, and knew nothing of the squire's errand. Too well convinced then of what he had apprehended, he returned homeward in rage ; and, from some suspicions that arose in his head, he thought of taking the shrubbery in his way. But his wife was lucky enough to perceive him coming, and kept herself so close that he passed by without discovering her. Nevertheless, it being time to return home, after he had got to some distance, she rose and took leave of her friend. " I am in the greatest dread on your account," said the priest ; " you are going to get yourself killed ; he will certainly despatch you." " Think only of yourself," replied she, smiling. " Take care that you are not seen by any one ; the rest is my business, and you may sleep in quiet."

On her entrance at home she was received with a torrent of abuse. " Vixen ! whence come you ? I'll engage you have been along with the parson. I can now account for your importunity to get me to bed." She listened to his reproaches with astonishing coolness, did not answer a word, but let him throw away his fire, in hope, no doubt, that the quarrel would end there. But when she found that he took her silence for a confession of her guilt, and in consequence seized her by the hair to cut it off, " Stop !" she cried, " and judge whether I am to blame. You know, sir, the extreme anxiety I have to get you an heir. I now think

myself fully assured of one, and my vows are in part fulfilled already. But I am still ignorant of the sex of the infant that I have conceived, and that is what I am so desirous to know. I have been inquiring of everybody ; I have questioned all my female friends, and they told me—but you will laugh at me”—and then, affecting a kind of bashfulness, she seemed to blush.

This appearance of mystery, this air of embarrassment, and the beginning of an explanation so singular, excited the curiosity of the husband. He ordered her to go on ; but she required a good deal of pressing, made him promise he would not laugh at her, and at length, as he was going to be angry, she proceeded—“ Well, since you are resolved to know it, they instructed me in a secret, which, they say, is infallible ; and this is it :—One must go three nights running to the gate of the church, and each time walk three times round the walls without speaking ; afterwards one must say the Lord’s Prayer three times, and lastly, dig a hole with one’s nails in the earth. The third day after, one is to go and examine the hole. If it is open, the child will be a boy ; if shut, a girl. The day before yesterday I began the solemn process ; to-night I finished my last circuit, and to-morrow I shall be acquainted with the issue ; or, as it is now past midnight, I can this instant learn it, if you will give me leave.” She then begged her husband to return with her to the church. It was in vain that

he endeavoured to be excused, and urged that it would be soon enough when they went to mass; she pressed him so importunately, and showed so extravagant a desire to satisfy her longings, that the honest squire, in consideration of the condition she declared herself to be in, at last agreed to accompany her. Although there was light enough to direct their way, she insisted on taking a lanthorn, that they might see the better.

When they arrived at the church gate, she shows him, at a small distance from it, the spot where she said she had been digging, and begs him to go and see what she was to expect. He approaches the place, looks about, opens the lanthorn, looks again, and cries he can find no hole. At this intelligence the wife runs up to him in transport. She throws her arms round his neck, weeps through joy, embraces him over and over again, falls upon her knees to thank God for the favour she has obtained, and plays so many extravagant tricks, that the husband, enraptured likewise, embraces her in his turn, and returns home with her full of joy.

What are we to infer from this story? only this—when a woman has got a simple husband, it is her own fault if she does not obtain all that she desires.

THE THREE BEGGARS OF COMPIEGNE.

THREE blind beggars were on their way from Compiègne to seek alms in the neighbourhood. They kept the highroad to Senlis, and walked at a great pace, each holding a cup and stick in his hand. A young ecclesiastic, well mounted, and attended by a valet on horseback, who was riding towards Compiègne, was struck at a distance with their steady and rapid strides. "Those fellows," said he, "for men who appear blind, make very firm steps. I'll endeavour to find them out, and see if they are not impostors."

Accordingly, as he came near them, and as the beggars, hearing the trampling of the horses' feet, had ranged themselves in a line to ask for charity, he called to them, and pretending to give them some money, but in reality giving them nothing, said, "There is a besant; it is intended for you all three, and you will divide it between you." "Yes, your reverence, and may God bless you in return for it!" Although no one of them received the money, yet each was confident his comrade had got it. Thus, after many thanks and good wishes

to the horseman, they resumed their march full of spirits, but at the same time slackened their pace.

The churchman feigned also to proceed on his journey; but at some distance he alighted, and delivering his horse to the care of his valet, directed him to wait his arrival at the gates of Compiègne; then he gently approached the beggars, and followed them, to watch the issue of the adventure.

When they no longer heard the noise of horses, the leader of the little band halted. "Comrades," said he, "we have done a good day's work; and I think we had best return to Compiègne, and spend the money this good Christian has given us. It is a long time since we have had a carousal; and now we have enough to enjoy ourselves completely, let us think of nothing but pleasure."

On their arrival in the town, they heard a cry of, *Good wine! wine of Soissons! wine of Auxerre! fish and good fare! walk in, gentlemen; pray, walk in!* They would not go any further, but entered the first house; and after having cautioned the people not to judge of their means by their outward appearance, in the tone of men who derive confidence from the weight of their purse, they desired that they might be served quickly and well. Nicholas (for that was the name of the landlord) being used sometimes to see persons of their vocation spend more than such as appear to be in much more affluent circumstances, received them respect-

fully. He showed them into his best dining-room, begged they would be seated, and order what they liked best, assuring them that there was nothing in Compiègne but what he could set before them, and in a style that would give them perfect satisfaction. They desired that plenty of good things might be got ready, and instantly master, waiter, maid, all in the house set about it ; a neighbour was even sent for to assist. At length, by virtue of several hands and good speed, they contrived to serve up a good dinner of five dishes ; and immediately the beggars sat down to it, laughing, singing, drinking to each other, and diverting themselves with clumsy jokes on the simple traveller who was at the expense of the feast.

He had followed them with his valet to the inn, and was within hearing of their merriment.

He even resolved, that he might not lose any part of it, to dine and sup in a snug manner with the landlord. The beggars all this time occupied the best room, and were waited on like noblemen. Their mirth was thus prolonged till the night was pretty far advanced, when, to make a suitable close to so jovial a day, they each called for a bed, and went to rest.

The next morning the landlord, who wanted to get rid of them, sent his servant to call them up. When they had come down-stairs, he made out their bill, which amounted to tenpence. That was the moment the mischievous churchman so im-

patiently expected. To enjoy the matter more at his ease, he came and posted himself in a corner of the room, but without showing himself, lest his presence might be a restraint on the guests. "Master," said the blind men to the landlord, "we have a besant ; take your account, and give us our change." He holds out his hand to receive it, and as no one offers it him, he asks them again, when each says, "It is not I." The landlord then gets into a passion—"So, gentlemen vagrants, you think I am to serve here as a butt for your diversion ! Be so good as to end all this mockery, and pay me immediately my tenpence, otherwise I'll give you all three a drubbing." They then began to inquire of each other for the piece of money, to suspect each other's honesty, to call names, to quarrel ; till at length such an uproar and confusion ensued, that the landlord, after giving each of them a box on the ear, called his servant to come down with two good sticks.

The ecclesiastic all this while kept laughing in his hiding-place till he was ready to fall into convulsions. But when he found the affair was becoming serious, and heard them talk of sticks, he came forward, and with an air of surprise asked the cause of the quarrel. "Sir, here are three knaves, who came yesterday to consume my provisions ; and now I ask them for my due, they have the insolence to mock me. But, by all that's sacred, they shall not get off in that manner, and

before they go out"—— "Softly, softly, Master Nicholas!" said the churchman; "these poor men have not wherewithal to pay you, and in that case they deserve rather your pity than your resentment. How much does their bill amount to?" "Tenpence." "What! is it for so paltry a sum that you raise all this disturbance? Come, make yourselves easy; I will take it upon myself. And for my part, what am I to pay you?" "Fivepence, sir." "That's enough; I shall pay you fifteenpence. Now let these unfortunate men go, and know that to harass the poor is a sin of the first magnitude."

The blind men, who were terrified at the apprehension of the bastinado, made their escape with all possible haste; while Nicholas, who had reckoned on losing his tenpence, being delighted to find a person to pay it, launched out into the most flattering encomiums on the churchman. "What a good man!" cried he. "That is the kind of priest we should have, and then they would be respected. But unfortunately there are but few such! Be assured, sir, so handsome an action will not go unrewarded. You will prosper in the world, take my word for it, and will find the good effects of your generosity."

All that the crafty traveller had been saying to his host was but a fresh piece of roguery on his part; for, in luring the innkeeper with such ostenta-

tion of generosity, he only meant to trick him as he had already done the beggars.

Just at that moment the parish bell was ringing to prayers. He asked who was to perform the service ; they told him it was their parson. "As he is your pastor, Master Nicholas," he said, "you are most probably acquainted with him ?" "Yes, sir." "And if he would engage to pay the fifteen-pence that I owe you, would not you acknowledge us quit ?" "Undoubtedly, sir, if it were thirty, and you desired it." "Well, then, come along with me to the church, and we will speak to him." They went out together ; but first the ecclesiastic directed his valet to saddle the horses, and to keep them in readiness.

The priest, as they entered the church, had just put on his sacerdotal habit, and was going to read prayers. "This will keep us very long," said the traveller to his host ; "I have not time to wait, but must proceed immediately upon my journey. It will satisfy you, I should imagine, to have the parson's word for the money? Nicholas having nodded assent, the other went up to the parson, and dexterously slipping into his hand twelve deniers, said, "Sir, you will pardon my coming so near the pulpit to speak to you ; but much ceremony need not be observed between persons of the same condition. I am travelling through your town, and lodged last night at one of your parishioner's, whom in all probability you know, and whom you may now see

hard by. He is a well-meaning man, honest, and entirely exempt from vice ; but unfortunately his head is not so sound as his heart,—his brain is somewhat cracked. Last night one of his fits of madness prevented us all from sleeping. He is a good deal better, thank God, this morning ; nevertheless, as his head is still affected, and full of religion, he begged we would conduct him to church, that he might hear you say a prayer, that the Lord may in His goodness restore him to perfect health.” “ Most cheerfully,” answered the parson. He then turned to his parishioner, and said to him, “ Friend, wait till I have done the service, when I ’ll take care that you shall have what you desire.” Nicholas, who thought this an ample assurance of what he went for, said no more ; but attended the traveller back to his inn, wished him a good journey, and then returned to the church to receive his payment from the parson.

The latter, as soon as he had performed the service, came with his stole and book towards the inn-keeper. “ Friend,” said he, “ go down upon your knees.” The other, surprised at this preamble, observed that there was no occasion for such ceremony in receiving fifteenpence. “ Truly they are not mistaken,” said the parson to himself ; “ this man cannot be in his right senses.” Then, assuming a tone of soft insinuation, “ Come, my good friend,” said he, “ place your trust in God ; He will have pity on your condition.” At the same time

he puts the Bible on the other's head, and begins his prayer. Nicholas in anger pushes away the book ; declares he cannot stay to be trifled with, guests being waiting for him at his house ; that he wants his fifteenpence, and has no occasion for prayers. The priest, irritated at this, calls to his congregation as they are going out of church, and desires them to seize the man, who is raving. "No, no ! I am not mad ; and by St Corneille you shall not trick me in this manner : you engaged to pay me, and I will not leave this place till I get my money." "Seize him ! seize him !" cried the priest. They accordingly fastened on the poor devil ; one taking hold of his arms, another of his legs, and a third clasping him by the middle, while a fourth exhorted him to be composed. He makes violent efforts to get out of their clutches, swears and foams with rage like one possessed, but all in vain ; for the parson puts the stole round his neck, and reads quickly his prayer from beginning to end, without excusing him a single word. After which he sprinkles him copiously with holy water, bestows on him a few benedictions, and then lets him loose.

The unlucky wight saw clearly that he had been made a dupe. He went home overwhelmed with shame and vexation at the loss of his fifteenpence, in lieu of which he had got a prayer and benediction.

THE CORDELIER'S BREECHES.

A LADY in the city of Orleans had an ecclesiastic for her lover. Whenever a woman undertakes to amuse herself in that manner, she should have a great deal of art and address; she should know how to tell a falsehood with a good grace; should have an imagination fertile in expedients; and, above all, she should have such command of herself as never to be disconcerted. Now such was, to an exquisite degree, the lady we are speaking of; never was there a more cunning piece of goods. Her husband, on the other hand, Michael by name, and a trader by profession, was of a very different character, being a plain, downright sort of man.

His business calling him frequently to the neighbouring fairs and markets, he had occasion to go to that of Meun. A cousin of his, named William, had likewise some affairs that required his attendance there, and they agreed to travel together. The husband had promised to take him in his road; and going early to bed, he desired his wife would call him at break of day. She, a little

pleased, as you may think, at the prospect of his departure, resolved to take advantage of his absence from home, and was in great haste to rid herself of him. Scarcely had he got into his first dream when she roused him suddenly—"Make haste, sir, and rise! you have overslept yourself, and will never get in time to the end of your journey." The good man, though he fain would have lain a little longer, and felt that he wanted a few hours of his usual rest, nevertheless rose immediately, and set out.

It is quite needless to inform you that the churchman had notice of his departure, and you may rest assured he was upon the watch to succeed the husband. As soon as the appointed signal was given, he slipped privately into the house, and in an instant received more caresses than poor Michael had had the luck to get in the whole course of his marriage. Meanwhile the husband had arrived at his cousin's door. He knocked again and again to awake his intended fellow-traveller, cried out to him by name, and cursed him heartily within himself for making him wait in that manner. "Why, surely you are mad," said his cousin from the window, "to begin your journey at such an hour! What! are you dreaming, friend? it is not yet midnight." "Not midnight!" said the other, "and my wife told me it was so late that we should not be able to arrive in time!" "Your wife was making sport of you, cousin, believe me; go to bed

again, and repose yourself quietly for a few hours longer."

Michael then returned home, and called to have the door opened to him. "Heavens! it is my husband!" cried the woman; "get out quickly, and hide yourself in some corner; I will afterwards contrive your escape." The gallant in haste bundled up his clothes, and took refuge in an adjoining chamber, but in the dark did not perceive that he had left his breeches behind him. The husband was all impatience at the door, and kept knocking with his whole force. The maidservant at last awoke at the noise, and went to open the door.

The wife, on his coming in, pretended to be fast asleep; and he, unwilling to disturb her, undressed himself quietly, and lay down. She then pretended to awake in a dreadful fright, and, jumping out of bed, began crying out for help like a mad woman. In vain did the husband endeavour to pacify her, assuring her that it was only he. "Who are you?" said she; "I know none here but my husband, and he is at present on the road; you are a villain, and have wicked designs on me. Know that I am a modest woman, and if you do not leave me instantly I shall alarm all the neighbours." Michael, on hearing this, was transported with joy. "Yes!" said he, with triumphant satisfaction, "yes, I see clearly you are a woman of virtue; and the more I know you, the stronger is my affection. But, my good wife, you roused me rather too soon; it is

not yet midnight, and I have come back to take my rest a little longer."

She answered with an engaging softness, "Ah ! sir, pardon my wildness ; I ought to have known your voice, as no other man's is familiar to me ; but I did not expect you, and I was really so alarmed to find one by my side," on which she approached to embrace him. It is impossible to describe the fondness of the simple husband, or to give an account of their caresses. He at length, however, fell asleep, and continued so till the morning rounds announced the day, when he awoke, and got up to take his departure ; but, being obliged to feel for his clothes, he made a curious mistake, for he put on the monk's breeches without perceiving it, and went away.

The other who, by his departure, found himself at liberty to withdraw, and feared, if he should stay longer, to be perceived in his retreat by his neighbours, came to take leave of the lady, and after a tender farewell searched about for his breeches. "What is this I see?" cried he ; "all is lost ! we are discovered, for here are your husband's breeches." The wife, at this intelligence, was at first in great consternation ; but a moment's reflection restored her to herself, and she assured her lover that he might make his mind easy respecting the event. She only desired him to give her what he had at his girdle, then she fetched him other breeches, embraced him affectionately, and sent him away.

Soon after she repaired to the monastery of the Franciscans, and, with an appearance of candour and ingenuous modesty that might have imposed on the most knowing, told the monk who had the charge of the gate that, having been some years married and, notwithstanding her ardent wishes, not having hitherto had children, she had been assured that, by a peculiar gift of heaven, the breeches of their holy order were endowed with the virtue of rendering her pregnant, if a pair of them were placed only for a single night at the head of her bed ; she had, in consequence, come to beg the monk, that either he, or one of the worthy brethren, would for charity sake lend her a pair. This request, in spite of the serious air with which she made it, appeared so ludicrous to the ecclesiastic that he imagined she was laughing at him. However, on the application of a small sum of money, he suffered himself to be persuaded, and went for a pair of his own breeches.

Meanwhile Michael was at Meun, and was busily employed there in driving his bargains. The market being over, he went to dine in company with other traders and merchants of his acquaintance ; but the misfortune was, that when the accounts were to be settled, and Michael sought his purse for that purpose, he could discover nothing at his girdle but an ink-horn, in which he found a pen-knife, a quill, and a piece of parchment. He fell, on this discovery, into an ungovernable fury. A

hundred times over did he call his wife an abandoned creature, and returned in haste to Orleans to have his revenge.

As he entered his house, with eyes full of fury, "So," said he, "my very scrupulous and chaste wife, you are not at a loss to know the reason of my returning so quickly." She did not appear at all terrified at this address, but answered with a smile, "Oh, I suspect what it is; but since you have made so curious a blunder as to take them with you to Meun, I beg you will take the trouble of carrying them to the Cordeliers." Then she recounted to him the story she had fabricated, her extreme desire to have a child, and the cause of her veneration for the breeches of the order of St Francis; in short, all that she had before said to the monk at the convent.

Michael's first idea was to place no reliance on this improbable apology, framed evidently for the purpose. He thought it would be a master-stroke of policy to detect the whole story by going instantly to the convent, and inquiring into the fact. It is easy to conceive what happened. The monk, who was first deceived, acknowledged that a woman of creditable appearance, dressed in such and such manner, with much seeming devotion towards St Francis and his holy order, had come with faith to require a pair of breeches from one of the fathers, and that he, unworthy as he was, had lent her a pair of his. "Ah! brother," cried the husband,

“what happy information you have given me ; but for you it had been all over with my wife ; I should have killed her.”

He returned home full of rapture, made a thousand apologies to his wife for the suspicions he had rashly conceived, and promised, by his attention and good treatment, to make her forget his unjust anger. Possessed of the entire confidence of her husband, she enjoyed for a long time the liberty it procured her. She went and came, visited abroad or saw at home whomsoever she thought proper, whilst the outwitted husband never imagined that he had any reason to complain of her conduct.

THE PHYSICIAN OF BRAI.

IN former times a labouring man, by means of parsimony and hard work, had contrived to collect a small property. Besides plenty of corn and wine, with some well-hoarded silver, he had in his stable four horses and eight oxen. Notwithstanding this comfortable provision, he had not turned his thoughts to matrimony. His friends and neighbours often upbraided him on that head ; but his excuse was, that if he could fall in with a woman to his liking, he would add a wife to the appendages of his household, but that till then he should beg leave to decline it. They, on their part, engaged to bring him the very best that could be found, and accordingly they set on foot their inquiries.

At some distance lived an old knight, extremely poor, who had now become a widower, and had a well-educated and handsome daughter. The damsel was ripe for marriage ; but as the father could give her nothing, she was in danger of losing her market. At length the friends of our country knight having demanded her in his name, the father

readily assented, and the daughter, who had prudence, and durst not offend her parent, found herself, though with reluctance, under the necessity of complying. The clown, flattered with the alliance, had the contract immediately concluded, and the marriage celebrated as hastily as could be.

But it was no sooner accomplished than disagreeable and vexatious reflections took possession of his mind, when he considered how unfit a knight's daughter was for one of his profession. Whilst he should be out-of-doors attending his affairs, either with the cart, the plough, or at any other labour, what was to become of his wife, whose education had not enabled her to set about any useful work, and whose condition would oblige her to stay at home? The parson, with whom every day is Sunday, will not fail, thought he, of being assiduous in his attendance, to prevent her feeling the inconvenience of solitude; he will come one day and return again the next, and then good-bye to a husband's honour! What was to be thought of then, since the marriage cannot be undone? "Suppose," said he to himself, "I were to beat her before I went out in the morning, she would then cry all day, and, while occupied in that manner, she certainly would not be inclined to listen or give encouragement to gallants. On my return at night we should be reconciled on my asking pardon, and I surely know the right method to obtain it."

His mind fully engaged in this fine plan, he asked for his breakfast. After the repast he went up to the lady, and with his hard, clumsy fist gave her so smart a blow upon the cheek that the impression of his four fingers was left upon it. But that was not all: as if she had been guilty of some egregious failure in her duty, he repeated his blow several times, and then went out into the fields. The unfortunate wife began to weep, and to give herself up to affliction. "Why would my father make a sacrifice to this brute? Were we then in want of bread, and why was I shortsighted enough to consent to the marriage? Alas! if my poor mother had been alive, I should not have been doomed to this wretchedness. What will become of me?" She was so distracted that she would not admit of consolation, and, as the husband had anticipated, passed the whole day in tears.

When he came in at night, his first care was to endeavour to appease her. It was the devil, he said, that tempted him. He vowed never again to lay hands upon her, threw himself at her feet, and with such appearance of contrition craved pardon, that the wife promised to forget all. They accordingly made their peace, and supped together in a friendly manner; but the boor, seeing how well his stratagem had succeeded, resolved on a repetition of it. The next morning then, at rising, he found pretence to quarrel again with his wife, struck her, and went out, as he had done the day

before. She thought herself now for a certainty condemned to suffer without resource, and gave herself up to her sorrow.

Whilst she was thus indulging her affliction, two king's messengers came to the door mounted on white horses. They saluted her in the name of the monarch, and asked her for some refreshment, as they were ready to expire with hunger. She immediately prepared for them what she had in the house, and asked whither they were going equipped in that manner. "We do not exactly know," said they; "but we are in quest of some able physician, and will cross over to England if we cannot otherwise find one. The king's daughter is in great danger. About eight days ago, as she was eating fish, a bone stuck in her throat. All the attempts that have been since made to relieve her, and extricate the bone, have been ineffectual. She can neither sleep nor eat, and she suffers the most intolerable anguish. His Majesty, who is wonderfully afflicted on the occasion, despatched us to bring some one that is able to cure his daughter. If he should lose her, he will die with grief." "Go no further," answered the lady; "I have a man for your purpose, an extraordinary physician, whose skill exceeds that of Hippocrates." "O heavens! is it possible? or do you mean only to amuse us?" "No, I tell you the real truth. But the physician I am speaking of has a peculiar whim of his own; he is so perverse that he will not

exert his talent until he is soundly beaten." "Oh ! if that be all, we'll take care he shall not want a handsome drubbing. He is in good hands. Only let us know where he resides."

The wife then directed them to the field in which her husband was at work, and cautioned them particularly not to forget what she had told them respecting his strange perverseness, and the method of curing it. They thanked her, and, each providing himself with a stick, they spurred their horses up towards the countryman, whom they addressed in the king's name, desiring him to follow them. "For what purpose?" he inquired. "To cure his daughter. We have been informed of your skill in physic, and are come to order you to court in his name." The clown replied that he was a tolerably good labourer, and that if his Majesty wanted anything done in that way, he should be happy to offer him his service ; but as for medicine, he protested that he knew nothing of it. "I see plainly," said one of the horsemen to his companion, "that he wants a beating, and that civil words will have no effect with him." They instantly dismounted from their horses, and belaboured him in such a manner as if they strove which should do it better than the other. At first he was going to remonstrate against the injustice of their treatment, but he found reasoning would not do against the argument of superior force, so that he was constrained to submit, and to promise

an implicit obedience to whatever they might require. They ordered him then to get upon one of the mares that drew his cart, and thus conducted him to the king.

The monarch was in the greatest uneasiness on account of his daughter's condition. The return of the two messengers restored in some degree his hopes, and they were instantly ordered in to acquaint him with the success of their researches. These men, after an extravagant encomium on the wonderful and whimsical man whom they had brought with them, informed the king of all the particulars of their adventure. "I never," said the prince, "heard of so extraordinary a physician; but as it is his humour, and he likes a beating, if nothing else will induce him to cure my daughter, e'en let it be so."

He immediately ordered down the princess, and desiring the countryman to approach, told him there was the patient he had to cure. The poor devil fell upon his knees, crying out for mercy, and swore by all the saints in heaven that he knew nothing, not a single word, of physic. All the answer the monarch made was a signal to two robust sergeants, who were there in readiness. These men, with good sticks, poured upon his shoulders such a heavy shower of blows that he soon cried out, "Mercy! mercy! I will cure her."

The young princess was brought before him,

pale, and almost expiring ; she opened her mouth, and with her finger pointed out the seat and cause of her anguish. He considered within himself how it were possible to effect the cure, for he saw clearly that there was no retracting, and that he had only the choice of the alternative, either to accomplish the remedy or submit to be beaten to death. "The evil extends no farther than the throat," said he to himself ; "now, if I could but contrive to make her laugh, perhaps she would throw out the splinter." This struck him as a feasible expedient ; he requested therefore of the king that a large fire might be made in the audience-chamber, and that the princess and he might be left alone together for a few minutes.

This being done agreeably to his wishes, and none in the room beside the princess and himself, he throws off his clothes, and lies down before the fire ; then with his long, sharp nails he begins to scratch and curry his hide, making, at the same time, such contortions and grimaces that the princess, in spite of all her pain, could not contain herself, but at once broke out into a burst of laughter. The sudden efforts of nature threw out the bone. The countryman took it up and ran to the door, crying out to the king, "Here it is, sire ! here it is !" "You restore me to life," said the overjoyed monarch, and in recompense promised him some clothes and robes. The countryman thanked him, but required nothing

except permission to go home, where his family affairs called for his return. In vain did the king offer him his royal protection and the appointment of his physician ; he persisted in the refusal, and urged that it was absolutely necessary for him to return home : for when he came away there was no bread in the house, and corn was wanted at the mill.

But when, on a signal made by the king, the sergeants recommenced the discipline they had before inflicted, he implored mercy and forbearance, and promised to continue there all his life if they required it. He was then conducted into an adjoining chamber where, after they had stripped off his rustic habit, and shaved and shorn him, he was dressed in a rich scarlet robe. During all this he thought of nothing but the means of making his escape ; and he reckoned that, it being difficult for them always to keep eyes upon him, he should soon find an opportunity.

In the meantime the extraordinary cure he had operated was reported abroad, and at the news above eighty diseased persons, in hope of the same relief, had flocked to the palace, and entreated the good offices of the sovereign with his physician in their favour. The king, sending for him, said, " Friend, I commend these poor people to your care ; cure them immediately, that I may send them to their several homes." " Sire," answered the countryman, " unless God will take them in hand along with me, it is impossible ; they are too

numerous." "Let the sergeants be sent for," exclaimed the prince. At the sight of these executioners the unfortunate boor again apologised, and promised to cure all in the palace, down to the very scullions.

He requested then that the king and all his attendants, who were in good health, would leave him in the audience-chamber with his patients. When the monarch and his suite had retired, he ranged the sick people all round the hearth, where he had made a rousing fire, and addressed them thus—"My friends, it is no trifling job to restore health to so many afflicted persons, and, above all, so expeditiously as you require it. I know only of one method ; it is to single out the patient that is in the worst condition, to throw him into the fire, and then to make up his ashes into powders to be swallowed by the rest. The remedy is a rough one, I allow, but it is certain, and I will answer with my life for its efficacy." At these words of the physician they looked round at each other, as if to examine their respective conditions ; but in the whole company there was not one, whether hectic or dropsical, that for the world would acknowledge his complaint dangerous.

The doctor then addressed himself to the nearest in the circle, "You appear to me very pale and languid, I imagine you are in the worst way." "Who? I, sir?" answered the other, "not at all ; I feel myself at this moment greatly relieved, and, indeed, was

never better in the course of my life." "How is this, impostor! you are in good health! Then what business had you here?" Instantly the patient flies to the door, and makes his escape. The king was without waiting the issue, and resolved to have the doctor once more cudgelled, unless he acquitted himself without it. Seeing a sick man come out, "Are you cured?" said he. "Yes, sire." A moment after another appears; "And you?" "And I also." In short, there was not one person, whether young or old, married or single, that would agree to be made into powders; so that all went out pretending they were cured.

The king, charmed with his skill, came in to congratulate the doctor, and declared himself lost in wonder at the miracle that had been worked in so short a time. "Sire," answered the countryman, "I am possessed of a secret charm of unparalleled virtue, by means of which I effect my cures." The monarch loaded him with presents, gave him silver and horses, assured him of his friendship, and permitted him to return home to his wife; but on condition that, in case his advice was wanted, he should return without obliging them to cudgel him. The boor then took leave of the king. When he got home, he had no further occasion to labour, never thought again of beating his wife, but loved her, and was beloved by her. Thus, in dubbing him physician, she made his fortune without intending it.

BERANGER.

IN Lombardy, a country not remarkable for the valour of its inhabitants, there lived a knight, who was a widower, with an only daughter. He had contracted debts, and was obliged to have recourse to an usurer, but this temporary shift, as it generally happens, only served to plunge him the deeper into difficulties; so that in a short time, being unable to satisfy his creditor in any other manner, he was obliged to compound matters by offering his daughter in marriage to the son. This offer was accepted, and the damsel espoused the son of the usurer.

The old gentleman was ashamed of this alliance, and was mortified in his soul that he had cast a blot upon the birth of his grandchildren. He created, however, his son-in-law a knight, and armed him with his own hand. Puffed up with this new title, our young plebeian thought himself elevated into a hero. His nobility was the constant theme of his conversation, and he spoke of the lower orders with derision. All he would listen to, especially at table, was tournaments, arms, and

combats. He hoped by that to give his wife a great opinion of his prowess ; but he found that it only subjected him to her contempt. To impose on her then in a manner somewhat more specious, he declared that, ashamed to have suffered love to chain down his valour, he was resolved at length to show her what a husband she had got, and engaged that, if he could shortly fall in with an adversary, he would give proofs of such prowess as all her ancestors combined together would have been unable to exhibit.

The next day he rose early, sent for a perfectly new suit of armour, then mounted a showy charger, and sallied forth courageously. The only difficulty was to determine whither thus equipped he should bend his course, and by what means he should acquire with his spouse the reputation of a gallant knight. Not far distant there was fortunately a wood. Thither he repairs with full speed, ties up his horse, and looking round to see that he was observed by nobody, he hangs his shield on the trunk of a tree, and with all his force begins to exercise his sword upon it. He likewise shivers his lance to pieces against the tree ; after which he returns home with his shield, all hacked and cut, suspended from his neck, as knights usually travel.

His wife, as he dismounted from his horse, came to hold the stirrups. He commanded her to retire, and displaying his shattered arms, the pretended evidence of his combat, observed with an air of

contempt, that the whole family from which she was so vain of tracing her origin, could not together have borne the dreadful assault which he had just sustained. She made no answer, but went in again—not a little surprised, however, to see his shield battered as if he had been at a tournament, whilst neither knight nor horse had received a scratch.

The following week our hero sallied out again with the same success. He had even the insolence on this occasion, when the wife came on his return to assist him in getting off his horse, to push her from him rudely with his foot, as if she were not fit to touch a man of his extraordinary merit. The horse, notwithstanding, had come back as fresh as when he set out ; the sword, which was hacked like a saw, did not show the least trace of blood, and neither the helmit nor the coat of mail appeared to have received a single blow. All these circumstances excited a degree of mistrust in the lady. She strongly suspected the truth of these terrible combats ; and accordingly to discover the real facts, she in secret provided herself with the arms of a knight, and resolved to follow her husband the next time he went out, and if possible, to retaliate upon him.

He soon returned to the wood, to despatch, as he gave out, three knights who had dared to provoke him to combat. The wife pressed him to take some squires armed along with him, if it were only to guard against treachery. But this was what he would by no means agree to ; for he declared that

he had confidence enough in his own arm to meet three men without apprehension, or even more, if they had the audacity to present themselves. As soon as he was gone, the wife made haste to arm herself. She laced on a coat of mail, hung a sword by her side, tied a helmet on her head, and galloped after the braggadocio.

Already had he reached the wood, where with a dreadful noise he was belaying his new shield. The wife, at first sight, was seized with a violent fit of laughter; but composing herself, she came up, and in order to provoke a quarrel with him, addressed him in the following abrupt manner—"Slave! by what authority dost thou come here to cut down my trees, and interrupt my progress with that odious din? Is it to put it out of thy power to give me satisfaction that thou destroyest thy shield? Coward as thou art, cursed be he that does not despise thee as much as I do. I here arrest thee as my prisoner: follow me instantly, to rot in one of my dungeons!"

The poor knight was at this address ready to drop down with fear. He found himself caught, without the least chance of escaping, and did not feel courage enough to fight. If a child that moment had advanced towards him, he durst not have put himself on the defensive. His sword soon dropped from his hands; he entreated forgiveness, and promised never again to enter the wood during life; and further offered, if he had done any damage, to make it good a hundred times over.

“Base-minded wretch ! to imagine that gold can repress the indignation, and avert the vengeance of a brave man. I shall shortly teach thee another sort of language. Before we leave this place our quarrel must be decided by arms. Quickly mount thy horse, and think of defending thyself, for I never grant quarter ; and I give thee notice beforehand, that if thou art vanquished, thy head instantly flies off thy shoulders !”—at the same time she lets fall a smart blow on his helmet. The terrified wretch answered, trembling, that he had made a vow to God never to fight, and asked if it were not possible by any other means to make reparation. He was informed that there was one method, and only one.

Here it is necessary to interrupt the narration, and to claim the indulgence of the reader who, it is to be hoped, will excuse my just mentioning that the fair warrior proposes to the recreant knight to kiss a certain part of her body as an expiation for the offence ; that the poltroon acquiesces ; that the one dismounts and presents without mask or veil the object to which the other is to make submission, whilst the latter, taking off his helmet, approaches with one knee on the ground, and with great respect performs the ceremony, which suggests to him a very singular remark.

When he had risen up, he took the liberty of asking the name of his conqueror. “Of what consequence is that to you ? However, I will not con-

ceal it from you, whimsical as it is, and though I am the only one of my family that has borne it. My name, then, is Beranger, and my business is to shame cowards." This said, the lady mounted her horse again, and rode off.

On her way was the residence of a knight who had long been in love with her, and whose suit till then she had always rejected. But now she went into his house, told him that at last she accepted his vows, and even took him home behind her.

Soon after the husband entered, affecting to put on his usual confidence, when his people asked him the issue of his recent combat—"I am now at length," said he, "going to enjoy quiet ; my lands are entirely cleared of the freebooters that infested them."

After he had disarmed, he went in to give his wife an account of his last exploit, and was greatly surprised to see a man sitting by her side upon the couch, and to observe her embracing the stranger instead of getting up to receive him. He began to assume that imperious and threatening tone which had become familiar to him, and even pretended to go and bring his sword. "Hold your peace," said she, "you poltroon ! for if you dare so much as to breathe, I shall send for Beranger : you know how he treats cowards."

That word closed his mouth ; he withdrew in confusion ; and whatever liberties his wife indulged in afterwards, he durst not utter the least reproach, lest she should publish the adventure in the forest.

THE TWO FRIENDS.

TWO merchants had for a long time been connected in business. They had never seen each other, the one residing at Bagdat, and the other in Egypt ; notwithstanding which, from their long correspondence and mutual services, they entertained as perfectly a reciprocal esteem and friendship as if they had passed their whole lives together.

The Syrian merchant at last became very desirous to have an interview with his correspondent, and set out on his journey with that intention, after having apprised his friend of it. The Egyptian rejoiced heartily at the news, and on his friend's approach went out several leagues to meet him. On his arrival he lodged the Syrian in his own house, and making a display of his riches and all that he possessed, told him that all was at his disposal.

In order to amuse his guest, he invited different persons successively to his table. For a week together there was nothing but feasting and pleasure ; but in the midst of their enjoyments the traveller

was so struck with the beauty of a lady who had one day been present, that he fell dangerously ill. Immediately all the best physicians of the country were sent for. At first, neither by his pulse nor by any symptom, could they discover the nature of the merchant's disorder ; but at length by his profound melancholy they conjectured that love was the cause.

The Egyptian, on hearing this, conjured him to disclose his secret, that the remedy might if possible be found. His guest, thus called upon and pressed to declare it, acknowledged he was in love, and that without possession of the object of his affection he could not sustain life. " But where to find her, I know not ; I am wholly unacquainted with her name and abode. My eyes beheld her but once (to my great misfortune) ; but day and night her image is present, and without her I shall certainly die." He then fainted away.

For several hours he continued in this trance, and was even thought dead. Awaking at length, he cast his eyes about the room to discern the object of his passion, but ineffectually. She was not among the persons present. His friend at last, in order to obtain for him, if possible, a sight of his beloved, thought of bringing successively to his bed-side all the ladies who had been invited to the feasts, or whom he could have seen since he arrived in the country. But she was not of the number. At length the people of the house recol-

lected that there was in an inner apartment a young lady whom the merchant loved to distraction, and whom he had brought up with the greatest care, intending her soon to be his wife. She was by his desire introduced. Instantly on seeing her, the Syrian exclaimed, "That is she to whom I am to owe either my life or death." The merchant demurred for some time ; but with a heroic resolution, sacrificing his passion to his friendship, he presented the lady to his guest. He not only consented to their union, but even insisted on giving her a marriage portion. He made her presents of rich stuffs and money, and himself took charge of the nuptials, to which he did not fail to invite minstrels, who sang pantomimic songs, and enlivened the feast with all manner of gaiety.

When all these carousals were finished, the merchant proceeded to take leave of his generous host, and to return with his wife into his own country. His friends, on his arrival, pressed forward to congratulate him. There was a fresh celebration of the nuptials, with rejoicings which lasted for a fortnight, after which the merchant and his spouse lived happily together.

But in the meantime sad misfortunes happened to the Egyptian ; he met with such great losses that his fortune was entirely ruined. In this desperate situation he thought of having recourse to his friend at Bagdat, and determined to visit him there, reckoning on his gratitude for the eminent

services which he had rendered him. He was obliged to make this long journey on foot, and to suffer both hunger and thirst, to endure both heat and cold, extremes of misery to which he had hitherto been unaccustomed. At length, after much fatigue, he arrived about nightfall at Bagdat. But at the moment when he was going to enter the town, the state of wretchedness in which he was excited in him a sentiment of shame at proceeding farther. He thought that, if he presented himself in the dark to his friend in this miserable state, he would not recollect him, and therefore he judged it best to wait till morning. With this intention he entered into a temple which he observed hard by.

No sooner did he find himself in this dismal, lonely place, than a multitude of melancholy ideas assailed him. "Good God!" cried he, "to what a wretched condition has your will reduced me! Alas! my former affluence renders it still more miserable. I had all that I could wish for, and now I find myself an outcast, without property and without friends! Surely, in such circumstances, death is preferable to existence!"

While he was speaking thus to himself, he suddenly heard a great noise in the temple. A murderer had taken flight to it, and some of the citizens were following to seize him. They asked the Egyptian whether he had seen the assassin.

He, who wished to die, and thus to terminate at

once his shame and his sufferings, declared himself the guilty person. He was instantly seized, ironed, and thrown into prison. The next day he was brought before the judge, and, being convicted, was condemned to the gallows.

When the time for the execution arrived, a great number of people flocked to the place, and among others the friend whose life he had saved, and in quest of whom he had left his native country.

This last had not forgotten the obligation, and luckily he recognised his friend. But what could be done at this juncture to save his life. He could think of only one method, and that was to devote himself for his friend. Having taken this sudden resolution, he exclaimed, "Good people, take care what you are about, and do not be guilty of the sin of punishing that innocent man. It was I who committed the murder."

This declaration astonished the assembly. The execution was suspended; the merchant was apprehended, and they already began to untie the stranger.

But the real assassin happened to be there. When he saw them fettering the merchant, he was seized with remorse. "What!" cried he to himself, "shall this honest man die for my crimes, whilst I escape? Though I may evade the justice of man, I cannot escape the vengeance of God. No; I will not charge my conscience with a second offence, but will rather expiate my crime by suf-

fering here, than subject myself to the indignation of the Deity, who can punish for ever."

He then made a full confession, and was brought before the judges, who being puzzled at this extraordinary case, referred it to the king. He, no less perplexed than the judges, sent for the three prisoners, and promising them pardon if they would declare the truth, interrogated them himself. Each then recounted with fidelity what had happened; and the consequence was that they were all three pardoned and discharged.

The Syrian went home with his friend, whom he in his turn had had the good fortune to save. He ordered some refreshments to be served up to him, and said, "If you choose to reside here, my friend, I call God to witness that you shall never be in want of anything, but shall be as much master as myself of all I possess. If you prefer returning to your own country, I offer you the half of my fortune, or whatever part you like to take of it." The Egyptian declared his wish was rather to return home; and he departed, charged with presents.

THE ANGEL AND THE HERMIT.

A CERTAIN person had embraced the life of a hermit from his earliest years. It often happens that alone in a wood one may enjoy more happiness than in the society of a convent, or even than in that of the wide world. This hermit for a long course of years had mortified himself and fasted to purify his soul. Watching and labour, heat and cold, all extremes had grown familiar to him; but after so long a penitence he began at last to think that he had not been sufficiently recompensed by God, and to murmur that he had not been raised to one of those enviable conditions to which he was often a witness when gathering his food. "What!" said he, "does the Almighty load with blessings such persons as neglect him, and leave another that serves him faithfully in wretchedness and want? Why did he not create the world an equal benefit to all mankind? Why so unequal a partition of good and evil? so strange a distribution confounds me!"

As the good man in the course of his recluse life had acquired but little experience, this con-

sideration gave him much embarrassment. He was indeed so much puzzled by it that he resolved at last to visit the world, and to seek for a solution of his doubts. He accordingly took a staff, and set forward on his journey.

He had proceeded but a little way from his cell, when he was met by a young man of a very agreeable mien and well-proportioned figure, holding a javelin in his hand. His dress was that of a sergeant-at-arms, and he seemed to belong to the train of some rich lord. They saluted each other, and entered into conversation. "Who is your master?" said the hermit. "Sir, it is he who is master of the whole world." "For a certainty you could not have a better. And where are you going thus equipped?" "I have in this quarter a great variety of acquaintance, and I am going to visit them. But it is disagreeable to travel alone, and I wish to have some person to accompany me; you will confer a lasting obligation on me if you will do me that favour." The hermit, whose project would be greatly facilitated by such visits, readily agreed to the proposal, and they proceeded together.

The night overtook them before they could get clear of the wood. Fortunately, they descried a hermitage, whither they went to beg a lodging. The hermit gave them as good a reception as his hut could afford. He spread plenty of his frugal fare before them; but when they came to say grace,

the travellers remarked that, instead of praying like them, the hermit was busy in wiping and rubbing a cup made of curious wood, which he kept by him, and drank out of during the repast.

The angel observed where he laid it up, and rising softly in the night, took and hid it; and the next morning on setting off, without saying a word, he carried it along with him. On the road he mentioned the circumstance to his companion, who was quite indignant at his behaviour, and wanted to go back and return the cup to the hermit. "Hold!" said the angel; "I had my reason for acting in this manner, and you shall in due time be made acquainted with it. Perhaps you may have further motives hereafter for wondering at my conduct; but know that whatever you see me do, it is not without sufficient cause, and remember that you be not scandalised at it." The hermit on this reproof was silent; he bowed, and pursued his journey.

A prodigious fall of rain, which continued the whole day, wet them entirely through their clothes, they not being able to obtain any shelter. Night having come, fatigued and half-dead with cold, they entered a town; and as neither of them had money, they were obliged to go from house to house, asking in the name of God for an asylum. Everywhere they met with a refusal; for, as we observe people in general love money still better than they do God, the case was much the same at

that time. The rain still pouring down, they thought it best to go and take their seat upon the ground, under a flight of stone steps.

These steps formed part of a tolerably handsome house belonging to an old usurer, a very rich man, but one who would not part with a farthing to get his father into paradise. The avaricious landlord showed his head for a moment at the window, when our travellers, representing to him the sad condition they were in, supplicated him through charity to grant them a place to lie in. He made them no answer, but shut the window and retired.

"Brother," said the man with the javelin, "let us remain here, since we can procure no better accommodation; this pent-house will at least protect us from the rain." But a female servant, who overheard their complaints and came to examine the cause, had more compassion than her master, and admitted them into the house. She gave them a little straw, and they lay down upon it under the staircase. A few minutes afterwards she brought them a small dish of pease, the remains of the miser's supper; and in this manner they passed the night, without fire, without light, and almost perishing with cold and moisture.

On the dawn of day the hermit wanted to depart. "No," said the other; "I will not go away till I have taken leave of our host, and thanked him for his hospitality." He went immediately to find him, and as a mark of his gratitude, begged his

acceptance of a small present, which was no other than the cup which he had stolen the day before from the hermit. The usurer did not hesitate to accept it. He wished them a good journey, and assured them, that if on their return they brought him some other trifling boon, they should be provided with the same lodging.

When they were clear of the town, the hermit could not help declaring his astonishment to his companion. "You want to put me to the proof, I imagine," said he, "when you behave in this strange manner: you steal from that good old man who entertained us so hospitably, merely to give to that bloodsucker who denied us shelter! Is it your maxim to act in opposition to the practice of other men?" "I have already warned you to be circumspect in your conclusions," answered his companion; "consider that you have passed all your life in woods, and that you have had no experience of the world. Once more I desire you to follow me, and be surprised at nothing."

The third night they went to take up their lodging in a rich monastery. They were received charitably, and served with abundance; but the next morning the man with the javelin, before his departure, set fire to the straw of his bed, and took off his companion along with him. As they were ascending a hill at some distance, he desired the hermit to turn his head and look behind them. By this time the flames had reached the battle-

ments of the monastery : all was on fire. The hermit at the sight threw out a loud cry, "Wretch that I am ! behold me now an incendiary ! Whither shall I fly, where hide myself?"—in saying which he rolled himself upon the earth, struck his breast, and cursed the hour when he fell in with a man so abominable. "It is in vain that I warn you," said the other, "you again relapse into your former error ; but for the last time I caution you to be attentive, and follow me peaceably."

He was at no loss for a lodging that night, but took up his abode with the hermit at the house of a substantial tradesman. This was a respectable old man, grown grey with years ; he lived in a pious manner with his wife, whom he loved tenderly, and a child of ten years, the only product of his marriage and the consolation of his age. He prepared an entertainment for his guests, himself washed their feet, insisted on their eating with him at table, and the next day at parting embraced them, and bade them a kind adieu.

To gain the highroad it was necessary for the travellers to pass through the whole town, and to cross a river by which it was bounded on one side. The one with the javelin, pretending that he was not well acquainted with the streets, prevailed on their host to permit his son to accompany them as far as the bridge, and put them in the right road. The zealous old man went immediately and awakened the boy, who got up with alacrity to attend

the two travellers. But when they came upon the bridge, and the boy was taking leave of them, the hermit's companion, giving him a sudden push, plunged the youth headlong into the river, where he was swallowed up, and disappeared.

"I am satisfied with what I have done; are you also contented?" said he to the hermit. The last, at hearing his words, seized with dismay and terror, began to run with all his might, and stopped not till he had got a considerable way into the country. There he sat down to fetch breath, and to lament his fate. What have I been doing, unhappy, miserable mortal? I abandoned my cell, where I might have served God all my life in peace; and he has, as a punishment for my folly, delivered me over to a demon, and made me an accomplice of his hellish crimes!"

He was about to proceed in his lamentations, when the other, who had followed him to set him right, instantly appeared, and addressed him as follows—"Friend, listen to me. The mysterious plans of the Almighty on earth gave you offence in your cell. You dared to call in question his wisdom, and to prepare yourself to consult earthly beings, and to endeavour sounding the impenetrable abyss of his councils. You had perished that moment if his justice had given you up. But he was disposed to employ an angel to enlighten you, and it is I who have been charged with that duty. In vain have I endeavoured to show you

that world which you sought without knowing it : my lessons have not been understood, and I must explain myself more clearly."

He then entered into the particulars of his conduct, and the explanation of his motives for acting in the manner he had done. He spoke of the puerile attachment of the hermit for his cup. "You saw," said he, "that vile object occupy his heart, and make him forget the holy obligation of prayer. Henceforward, now that he is deprived of it, his mind, free from other affections, may be entirely devoted to God. I gave the usurer the cup as a return for the reception he was obliged to give us at his house, because God leaves no good action unrewarded ; but it is the only recompense that man will receive—his avarice will one day be punished. The monks, whose convent I reduced to ashes, were at first poor and laborious, and consequently led an exemplary life. Enriched by the indiscreet liberalities of believers, they have been corrupted ; for it is a misfortune in monks to be rich. In that palace which they had erected for their abode, their whole time was occupied in a scheme for extending their possessions, or in intrigues to supplant each other in the offices of the monastery. If they appeared in their hall, it was only to hear tales, or to pass their time in trifling amusements. Institutions, rules, church regulations, duties, all were neglected. God, to correct them, thought proper to reduce them to their former

poverty. They will build a monastery that will be less magnificent ; this work will afford subsistence to many labourers and poor artists ; and they themselves, being obliged as in their first state to cultivate the earth, will become possessed of more humility and goodness."

"You force my approbation of your conduct," answered the hermit ; "but why did you destroy that innocent child, who seemed so eager to render us a service ? Why deprive of its only comfort the old age of that respectable man, whose benevolence we experienced ?" "That old man, by whom we were received, only because I took the shape of one whom he knew, had for thirty years been employed in acts of charity. Never did the poor present themselves in vain at his door ; he even stinted himself to supply them. But since he has had a son, and particularly since that son has begun to grow up, his blind fondness urging him to amass a large patrimony for the youth to inherit, he has become austere and avaricious. Day and night his thoughts have incessantly been engaged on profit, and soon he would have laid aside all sense of shame and turned usurer. The child, dying in innocence, has been received in heaven ; the father, having no longer any motive for avarice, will recur to his old praiseworthy maxims : both will be saved ; and without what you call an atrocious crime, both of them had perished. Such are the secret designs of God, since you wish to know them. But re-

member that you called them in question ; repair to your cell and repent. For my part, I must return to heaven."

In saying these words the angel threw off his earthly disguise, and disappeared. The hermit, prostrating his face upon the earth, thanked the Almighty for his paternal reprimand. He then returned to his hermitage, where he passed the remainder of his days in so much sanctity, that he merited not only forgiveness of his error, but also the recompense promised to a virtuous life.*

* This story has been adopted by *Voltaire*, and is given at full length in his moral romance of *Zadig*, or the *Book of Fate*.

THE TWO TRADERS AND THE CLOWN.

TWO traders were proceeding on a pilgrimage.

A countryman who was prosecuting the same journey having joined them on the road, they agreed to travel together, and to make a joint stock of their provisions. But when arrived within a day's journey of the holy place, it was almost wholly expended, so that they had nothing left but a little flour, barely sufficient to make a small cake. The perfidious traders entered into a plot together to cheat their companion of his share, and from his stupid air imagined they could dupe him without difficulty. "We must come to some agreement," said one of the citizens. "What will not assuage the hunger of three may satisfy a single person, and I vote that it be allotted to one of us only. But that each may have a fair chance, I propose that we all three lie down and fall asleep, and that the bread may be the lot of him who on awakening shall have had the most curious dream.

The other citizen, as we may readily suppose, approved vastly this suggestion. The countryman

also signified his approbation, and pretended to give completely into the snare. They then made the bread, put it on the fire to bake, and lay down. But our traders were so much fatigued with their journey that, without intending it, they fell soon into a profound slumber. The clown, more cunning, waited only this opportunity, got up without noise, went and ate the bread, and then composed himself to rest.

Soon after one of the citizens awaked, and calling to his companions, "Friends," said he, "listen to my dream. I thought myself transported by two angels into hell. For a long time they kept me suspended over the abyss of everlasting fire. There I was witness to the torments of the damned." "And I," said the other, "dreamed that the gates of heaven were opened to me. The archangels, Michael and Gabriel, after raising me up into the sky, carried me before the throne of God. There was I a spectator of his glory." And then the dreamer began to recount the wonders of Paradise, as the other had of the infernal abode.

The countryman, meanwhile, though he heard perfectly well what they said, pretended to be asleep. They went to rouse him from his slumber, when he, affecting the surprise of a man suddenly disturbed from rest, cried out, "What is the matter?" "Why it is only your fellow-travellers. What! do you not recollect us? Come, arise and inform us of your dream." "My dream? Oh! I

have had a very droll one, and one that I am sure will afford you some diversion. When I saw you both carried away, the one to heaven the other to hell, I thought that I had lost you for ever. I then got up, and, as I expected never to see you more, I went and demolished the loaf!"

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THE CRUCIFIED PRIEST.

ROGER, a celebrated maker of crucifixes, had occasion to remark that a priest named Constant paid very frequent visits to his house. He began at length to suspect the priest of an intrigue with his wife, and in order to clear up his suspicions, or to obtain some proof of the fact, he pretended to go into the country, and set himself upon the watch. At night he perceived the priest enter the house. Fully convinced of what he wanted to know, he came up to the door, and knocked with all the consequence of the master.

The priest and the lady were both alarmed at this sudden and unexpected arrival of Roger, and Constant was extremely at a loss how to escape or hide himself. The wife desired him, in this embarrassment, to strip himself as quickly as possible, and to go and lay himself naked in the gallery on some cross among the crucifixes. He did so, but the husband, after having supped, also went into the gallery, under the pretence of wishing to look at some of his works. He walked round the gallery, and observing Constant, "Oh!" cried he,

“there is a very indecent Christ ! I surely must have been drunk when I made that crucifix.” So instantly, without saying another word, he with a knife corrected the fault. The priest, in this mangled condition, attempted to run away, but Roger arrested his flight, and, in addition to the revenge he had thus taken, obliged him, moreover, to pay fifteen livres for his ransom.

THE LADY AND THE PARSON.

A CITIZEN'S wife of Estampes had an amour with the parson of the parish. One day, when her husband was absent, she gave a rendezvous to the priest. He came, and brought a pie along with him ; but just as the two lovers had sat down to table the husband knocks at the door. Immediately the lady clears the table of all the dishes and plates, hides the parson under a great basket, and goes to open the door. The husband enters, and ascends into his room without perceiving anything.

The parson might have got out without difficulty, the more so as the lady had left the door wide open ; but his cloak was in the room, and besides, he did not wish that the husband should regale on his pie. He went up-stairs then after him, and addressing himself to the wife, said, " Neighbour, here I bring you back your basket, and have come for my cloak, which I deposited in pledge for it. I beg also that you will give me the pie which I left here this morning as I passed by."

The husband scolded his wife for having re-

quired a pledge of the parson, and after making many apologies to his reverence, was going to give him what he claimed. "As to the cloak, with all my heart," said the wife, "let him have it; but as for the pie, with submission to you, he shall not by my consent touch a morsel of it, unless he will sit down here and eat with us." The priest assented. So down they sat to table, and the two lovers, intent upon their original project, took advantage of the gaiety incidental to the repast to intoxicate the good man. Very soon his eye showed the condition he was in. He began to sing, to talk idly, and particularly to boast of his strength. The parson took him up on this head, and maintained that he was stronger. "As a proof of it," said he, "I'll wager you that I carry you all three, yourself, your wife, and the servant girl at the same time." "Done!" cried the other, and the wager which they both agreed to lay was a goose. Then, under pretence of putting them in a position in which he could grasp them all three together, the parson made the husband lie down upon his belly. He then put the maid upon him in the same posture, then the wife upon her, but he had placed the lady in a different manner.

Soon after he gets up, confessing that he has lost, when the wife insists that the goose which he is to bring shall be a good large one.

THE YOUNG LADY THAT WISHED TO FLY.

A YOUNG damsel of uncommon beauty had in the train of her admirers a great number of knights, squires, and burgesses ; but she refused to marry, and would not listen to any of their proposals. She happened to be no less silly than beautiful, and one day she took it into her head to say that she wished to be able to fly. Immediately several of her admirers went to work, striving which should please her most in making her a pair of wings with wax and feathers. When this was done, she was still as far from flying as ever. A young man, more cunning than the rest, finding her alone one day, said, "All these contrivances, my dear, are worth nothing. Don't you see that birds do not fly by the help of wings alone, but that to cut their passage through the air it is necessary for them to have a beak and a tail?" The young lady innocently enough agreed that he was right ; but how was she to provide herself with these appendages. "I'll undertake to furnish you with them," answered the young lover ; so placing the beauty

beside him, and giving her a number of kisses—"This," said he, "is the way to make a beak." By the end of a few months the damsel perceived that, far from being more capable of flying than she was before, she found it was not without some difficulty that she was able to walk.

THE TWO BANKERS.

TWO bankers, Martin and Beranger, were in partnership, and carried on business together without living in the same house. After a few years Martin married, and his partner, finding the wife to his liking, contrived by assiduity and attention to get into her good graces. At first their amours were happy enough, because they carried them on with due circumspection; but one morning when the husband had gone to 'Change, Beranger, who was still in bed, took it into his head to send for the wife, and to invite her to lie down with him. It was in vain that she remonstrated against this proposal, and represented to him the danger of her husband coming back, and not finding her at home. The man insisted on her complying with his extravagant request, and that with so much importunity, that at last she consented, whatever might be the consequence.

Scarcely had she lain down, before Beranger went and took up all her clothes, which he locked up. He then sent for Martin, and invited him to breakfast with him. Martin accordingly came, and

finding his partner apparently full of glee and satisfaction, could not help congratulating him, and asking him the cause. Beranger answered that it was not without good reason, since he at that moment had, within a pair of sheets, one of the most beautiful women in the world. The other asked if he could not be indulged with a sight of this beauty. His friend consented, and the lady was accordingly fully exposed to his view, except that her face was carefully concealed from him. Martin beheld her with the utmost admiration, and not at all suspecting that he was contemplating the charms of his own wife, again congratulated Beranger on his good fortune. Beranger then ushered him into another room to breakfast, and in the meanwhile gives the lady her clothes, who having quickly dressed herself, returned home.

Though determined to be revenged on Beranger for this trick, she affected to treat it as a good joke, and for some days behaved to Beranger with as much complaisance as before. But one evening she in her turn sent for him, and proposed that they should bathe together, her husband, as she asserted, being in the country. Beranger could not resist the invitation, and was no sooner in the bath than the lady took up his clothes and carried them away, as she said, lest any one should see them. As soon as she had done this, she stripped herself, and also entered the bath.

A loud knock was then heard at the door. This

was Martin, whom the woman had sent for. Beranger was dreadfully alarmed, and begged to be concealed somewhere. "What, poltroon!" said she, "powerful and strong as you are, are you frightened at a man? A pretty fellow for a woman to be with in danger! Well, if you have not the courage to defend me, you have nothing to do but to hide yourself behind me." Beranger took this advice; he crept up into a corner of the bath, and in order to be concealed the better, drew a napkin over his head.

Martin having entered the room, his wife made him a sign to approach, whispering to him, "Husband, I am bathing here with one of my female neighbours, who is ashamed of being seen, because her skin is none of the fairest. Let us divert ourselves a little at her expense. Say that you are going to bathe, just to frighten her." Martin did not wish for a better laugh; so he called out to the chambermaid that he was going to take the refreshment of the bath, and that he wanted to be undressed. Beranger, half dead with fear, touched the lady with one foot, and slinking up in his corner, entreated her in the most urgent manner to contrive some means of sending away her husband. But she turned her back upon him without deigning to vouchsafe an answer, the more disposed to torment him as she observed him to be in the greatest agitation.

As soon as Martin was undressed, he went and

put a foot in the bath. He said many droll things, and played a number of antic tricks, to the utter discomfiture of the pretended good woman who, bent almost double in the bath to be concealed, continued covered with the napkin. At length Mistress Martin, after having sufficiently diverted herself with the fears of her gallant, made a signal to her husband not to push his raillery any further, but to retire from the bath. When he had gone out of the room, she thus addressed herself to Beranger: "You took it into your head to play me a trick, and I had a mind to repay it. But I perceive that you are a poor, spiritless fellow; so adieu, and never again pretend to any acquaintance with me." She then returned him his clothes, and sent him away, doubly vexed at having lost his mistress and exposed himself before her.*

* This sally of libertinism and assurance, M. Le Grand tells us, was really played off in the century after this tale was composed. Louis d'Orleans, brother of Charles VI., being in bed with one of his mistresses, Mariette d'Enghien, by whom he had the famous bastard, the Count de Dunois, received one morning in his chamber Aubert de Cani, who was the lady's husband, and caused him, as in the tale, to admire her beauties, without discovering who she was.

THE FRIAR WHO TOLD THE THREE CHILDREN'S FORTUNES.

THERE was a friar who was in the habit of frequenting, in the exercise of his duties, a certain village, where lived a very rich man, of whom he had never yet been able to get the value of a halfpenny. He thought, however, he would still go on trying his best ; and it happened one day, as he came into the village, that he saw the man's wife standing at the door of their house. But when the woman perceived the friar coming, she ran in, and told her children, if the friar inquired for her, to say she was not at home.

The friar, of course, had seen her going in, and suspected the cause ; so he came up to the house, and asked the children if their mother was at home. They, as they had been bidden, answered that she was not. Still he stood there, and gazed first at one of the children, and then at another. Presently he beckoned the eldest to him, and asked him to let him see his hand. "Ah !" said he, loud enough for the mother to overhear him, "what sad things are in store for thee, poor child !" Then

he looked at the hand of the second, and exclaimed, "Alas ! this poor boy's future is still darker than his little brother's." Lastly, he took the hand of the youngest child, and let it fall from him again, saying, "And thy lot is hardest of all !" And when he had uttered these words, he turned away to go.

But the mother, who had been listening at the back, rushed out, and implored him to stop, and not leave them so soon ; and first of all she spread the table with her best fare, and invited him to help himself. When he had done, she begged he would explain to her what he meant just now by saying that all her children had gloomy prospects before them. He hesitated at first ; but, upon being pressed, he said, "The first shall be a beggar ; the second shall be a thief ; the third shall be an assassin." The poor mother was distracted ; but the friar begged her to be comforted, for, said he, "I think, mistress, I know a remedy." She asked him eagerly what that was. Then he said to her, "Make the one that is to be a beggar a friar, the one that is destined to become a thief an attorney, and the last, that will grow up to be a murderer, make him a physician."

THE STORY OF THE OXFORD SCHOLAR
WHO PROVED TWO CHICKENS TO
BE THREE BY SOPHISTRY.

A RICH gentleman in the country had an only son, whom he resolved to send to Oxford for three or four years. At the vacation the young man came home; and one evening when they were at supper, and there happened to be only a couple of fowls on the table, the father said to his son, "Now, I've spent a good deal of money on your education, sir, I should like very much to know what it is you've been learning all the time you've been at the university." His son answered, "O father! they've taught me, among the rest, sophistry, by which a man could prove, for instance, that these two chickens on the table are three." "I should like to see that done, uncommonly," said his father. The other took one of the chickens, and said, "You see, here's a chicken"—and then he took both chickens in his hands, and said—"and here are two chickens, and one and two make three." His father, without saying a word, helped himself to one of the chickens and his wife to the other, and then, turning to his son, he said to him very gravely, "There's the third for you, lad."

THE MERCHANT TURNED MONK.

THERE was once on a time a trader, who was so honourable in his dealings that he conducted his business in strict accordance with the dictates of conscience, and, when he had set apart for his own use sufficient to provide him with the necessaries of life, divided the rest among the poor. He was not satisfied even with this exemplary course of life, for at the end of a certain number of years he formed a wish to withdraw altogether from the world, and entered into a monastery, where he became noted for the sanctity of his demeanour and conduct. As he happened in his experience as a merchant to have been in the habit of frequenting the markets and fairs, he had, as it may be supposed, acquired a good deal of knowledge and dexterity in matters of business ; and whenever the convent required any purchases made, he was the person whom the superior invariably selected to procure what was needful.

One day he was sent in this manner to a neighbouring fair, with six pounds in his pocket ; and on the road he fell in with an aged gentleman who

was bathed in tears, and who appeared to be overcome by the most violent grief. Strongly affected by the stranger's condition, the ex-merchant stopped him, and begged to be informed what was the cause of his trouble.

"Ah!" exclaimed the old man, "my sorrow is sufficient to make me wish that I were dead, but there is something all the while which urges me to live on in spite of myself; and so here you behold me, doomed to a wretched existence till death releases me."

"Excuse my curiosity," returned the friar, "but if your misfortunes are not a secret, pray tell me, is there no remedy whatever?"

"None," answered the other; "but there is no reason why I should not admit you to my confidence, painful as is the recital of the circumstances; at least, I shall have your pity. Some time ago then, sir, under the pressure of adversities, into which it would be too tedious to enter, I, with my wife and child, found myself reduced to the utmost destitution. All my resources were exhausted, and I had nobody to whom I could turn for relief. In this dilemma I resorted to a desperate expedient. I borrowed six pounds of an usurer, on the condition that I should return the same to him this fair-time; but having no security to offer, I placed in his hands, as a pledge, my only son, binding myself, if I did not reimburse him at the proper term, to resign to him entire possession

of the boy. Judge, therefore, sir, of my feelings : to-day the fair opens ; I have neither money, land, nor property of any sort. I am in the most abject poverty ; there is no prospect of my precious offspring being redeemed. What will his mother say when she sees me return alone ?”

The friar had great difficulty in checking his emotion, but he did his best to console and reassure the poor old man. He used every argument which occurred to him, in the hope of raising his unfortunate companion's spirits, but he could not succeed at all.

“ It is all very well,” said the old man, “ when one is comfortable and happy one's self, to recommend cheerfulness to others. While we are talking together here my wife is in the depth of despair. Heaven grant me strength to bear all my trials ! it is all that I ask. My son has just arrived at an age when he can be of service to his mother. For my own part, I have it not in my power any longer, with my increasing infirmities, to assist her ; and my present intention is to go and throw myself at the feet of my creditor, conjuring him, if he is not perfectly inexorable, to allow me to be his hostage instead of my son.”

As they conversed thus, the two travellers reached the town where the usurer lived, and where the fair was held at which the good monk had to make his bargains. The gentleman, having no business at the fair, bade the friar farewell ; but the latter made

known to him his resolution to accompany him as far as the usurer's house, to learn the issue.

As soon as the money-lender set eyes on the old man, he asked him, in a savage manner, whether he had brought the amount of his debt. The old man told him that he had tried every means in his power of raising the six pounds, but had failed; and he implored him to have compassion upon him, and grant him further time. "At least," said he, "allow me to remain here in my son's place, for I am old and he young; and if he does not in a short time discharge the obligation, at any rate there will be the satisfaction for you of having befriended an honest and unhappy family." The friar joined his entreaties to those of his associate.

But the usurer threatened to cast the young man instantly into prison, and leave him to starve there, unless the money was produced. The father fell prostrate on the ground, tore his clothes, and exhibited such paroxysms of grief and despair, that the friar, on the impulse of the moment, was within an ace of offering the debtor the money which he had with him to buy things at the fair. But he bethought him—"This money does not belong to me; it was given to me for a particular purpose: ought I, to save the life of a man whom I never saw before, to risk my own good name, and misapply the property of my brethren?"

His hesitation, however, was only temporary. The usurer was unrelenting; he seemed to have it

in his power to save, not a single life, but a whole family ; and laying the six pounds out before the usurer, he demanded the young man's liberty. The father's joy was unspeakable ; he returned home with his child, vowing life-long gratitude to the unknown benefactor of him and his ; while the friar, having no longer the means of executing his commissions at the fair, retraced his steps, a little doubtful of his reception when he presented himself at the convent empty-handed. But he was pleasantly disappointed, for the whole fraternity united in thanking him for the service which he had done to God and to them, and his superior gave him a fresh supply of money to take back to the fair, where, the story says, under the divine favour, he bought as much for two pounds as he could have bought before for six.

THE FRENCH CURÉ WHO SAID
"HEUGH !"

A FRENCH curé saddled his hack one morning early to go to market. He was extremely anxious to get there among the first, and in order to save time, he had left saying his prayers, thinking that he would do that very well as he went along. He had not ridden any great distance from the town when he espied, a little way out of the highroad, a mulberry-tree laden with fruit. The mulberries were so deliciously ripe in all appearance, that he could not resist the temptation of stopping to gather some, even at the risk of a little delay. Accordingly, he rode up to the spot, and reconnoitred.

It did not promise to be a remarkably easy job to reach the mulberries after all, for the tree was in a sort of thicket, and he could not get at them standing, it was clear enough. The priest thought of an expedient : he drew his nag right up into the middle of the brushwood, planted himself upright on the saddle, and holding on by a bough with one hand, with the other gathered the mulberries which were absolutely splendid. His horse all

this time was as still as a stone, and his master, as he ate the fruit at his ease, could not help admiring the sagacious animal's perfect tranquillity.

An unpleasant possibility all at once presented itself to his mind. "By St Denis!" said he, "it is only for some one to come here just at this moment and cry 'Heugh!' and I should be done for." But he gave rather too vehement an emphasis to the word "Heugh!" as it left his lips, and so startled his horse which, springing from under him, galloped away, and sent him sprawling among the brambles. He lay there completely powerless, with his clothes torn to ribbons, and his arms, legs, and hands lacerated by the thorns; and in this unhappy situation the curé was obliged to remain the rest of the day and all that night.

The horse, meanwhile, found his way back to his stable. The saddle turned the wrong way round, the bridle hanging down loose, the rider missing—all these circumstances indicated that something had gone amiss with the curé. Perhaps he had been thrown merely; but possibly he was killed. His wife, his servants, his neighbours, hastened in search of him. The whole day was spent in hunting for the lover of mulberries. At length one of the party happened to wander in the vicinity of the fatal tree, and the curé, who was half dead with cold and exhaustion, summoned up strength to call the man to his assistance. "For God's sake!" he cried, "come and save my life." The

fellow knew the voice directly, and followed it till it brought him to the poor curé, still recumbent on his bed of nettles. He raised him up, and presently took occasion to inquire what brought him to that pass. "Ah ! my good fellow," replied the curé, feebly, "it was saying 'Heugh !' that proved my ruin. Take me away, take me home." They conveyed him to his house, and put him to bed, where he speedily recovered from his fright and sores. But he never said "Heugh !" again, as long as he lived.

THE MAN WHO HAD THE DUMB WIFE.

A MAN married a woman who was a great heiress, and was also possessed of considerable personal attractions ; but she had one sad defect, which was, that she was dumb. The husband was deeply concerned at this misfortune, and thought how much he would give if his wife could get her speech. It happened one day that he met a man who asked him what was the reason of his being in such low spirits, and he told him that he never ceased to lament his wife's dumbness. The stranger said, "Try an aspen leaf ; lay it under her tongue as she sleeps this very night, and I will answer for the result." The delighted husband went immediately and got some aspen leaves, of which he placed three under his wife's tongue while she lay asleep. The next morning, when he woke, he was very anxious to see if the medicine had worked its effect, and he asked her how she did. She answered him sharply, "What do you mean by disturbing me so early?" Altogether, the lady made such excellent use of the newly acquired organ, that her spouse devoutly wished he had not

met with the physician, and had never heard of aspen leaves. In one of his walks he chanced to fall in once more with the same person who had cured his wife's dumbness, and he reminded him that he had seen him before. "Sir," said he, "when we met some time since, you were good enough to give me a medicine to make my wife talk. Pray, could you give me another medicine for making her dumb again." "Ho!" said the other, "what you ask is impossible. I am a magician, but I am not one of the most powerful. Yet, as you see, I could supply you with the receipt for making your wife speak. But to make a woman hold her tongue, is, I assure you, not only beyond my poor faculty, but beyond that of all the magicians in the world."

THE DENTIST.

THERE was in Normandy, once upon a time, a farrier, who was considered very clever in his profession. People came from all quarters to consult him, and he was never short of work. But if he excelled in one thing more than in another, it was in drawing the teeth of the honest rustics about. This was his plan:—He said to his patient, “Show me your tooth.” The mouth was opened at his bidding. “That tooth, I can see, is good for nothing,” said he; “we must have him out.” He takes a piece of wire, makes one end fast to the doomed tooth, tells his patient to kneel with his back to the furnace, and attaches the other end of the wire to the anvil. All this time a poker has been heating in the fire: at last it is red hot. The tooth-drawer takes it, and comes suddenly behind the fellow. “Look out!” says he, and thrusts the thing just under his nose. The other winces; the operation is complete. There is the wire on the ground, and his tooth at the end of it, like a hooked fish.

THE THIEF WHO TRIED TO RIDE ON A MOONBEAM.

A HOUSEBREAKER had formed the design of robbing a gentleman who resided in a certain town, and who had the character of being a very wealthy person. Accordingly, he climbed up to the roof of the house, and prepared to wait till the inmates had retired for the night. "Then," thought he, "I can easily make my way in somehow."

But the master of the establishment, as he lay in bed, happened to catch a glimpse of the shadow of the fellow in the moonlight. A thought struck him that he could be there for no good purpose, and he resolved to be even with him, if he could only contrive how.

"Look, my dear," whispered he, after a moment or two's pause, to his wife, "just ask me by what stroke of good luck I got all the money which we have. Speak loud, the louder the better, and I will be sure to be ready with my answer. You will not be long without knowing my reason."

The lady, without waiting to satisfy her curiosity

any further at present, did as she was bidden. He replied, in a most mysterious tone, that that was a great secret, a very great ; that it signified very little to her how it was that the money had come, and that she ought to be contented with the enjoyment of it, without asking questions. The lady, who had her orders, pressed him all the more ; but he affected to be insuperably reluctant to make the disclosure. At length she was so urgent in her appeal (partly, no doubt, on private grounds), that he, yielding to her importunity, as it seemed, frankly confessed to her, in a voice loud enough to be heard outside, that he had been a robber in his earlier days, and so had amassed this fortune.

“What ! my dear !” cried his wife, “you a robber, and have never been suspected ?”

“Yes,” he replied, raising his voice, “and this was how it was. I had a master, whose skill in his art never has been, and never will be, surpassed. He pursued his calling by night only ; but by means of a certain magic word which he had by heart, he could always reckon on conducting his operations in perfect security. Did he wish, for instance, to penetrate into anybody’s premises, he had nothing to do but to pronounce this word seven times in the light of the moon, and immediately a ray of that luminary, detaching itself from the rest, appeared at his side, and having allowed him time to mount, carried him up to the roof of the house, upon which he had his eye, for he invariably entered

from that part. Then when he desired to return, he repeated the talisman ; the ray re-appeared, obedient to the call ; he mounted, and was conveyed down gently to the ground. Such was my master's extraordinary gift ; and since you are so anxious to know, I inherited it from him when he died."

"I quite believe all you tell me," resumed the lady, "and it is certainly very surprising. What a valuable secret it would be if we had some friend or relative who was short of money. We could not do a kinder thing than to initiate him into it. Pray, my dear, what word was it that you used to utter seven times in the light of the moon ?"

Her husband pretended to be angry with her for being so extremely inquisitive ; but in the end, for the sake of quietness, he divulged to her that the talisman was "Seib." He then turned round, wished her good-night again, and feigned sleep. The lady followed his example.

The thief, who had overheard the whole conversation, felt at once an irresistible longing to try the experiment, which appeared to be such a wonderful saving of trouble and risk. Seven times in the moonlight, as he stood on the roof, he used the charm, and then, with outstretched arms, leapt into the air, as he thought, on the back of a moonbeam. He soon found himself on the pavement below, with a broken leg. "Who's there?" cried the gentleman, looking out of the window and

assuming the manner of a person startled out of deep sleep. "Ah, sir!" groaned the thief, "it's a poor fellow who thought he could make as good a thing as you did, and your master before you, of saying 'Seib.'"

THE TALE OF THE MAN WITH WOODEN LEGS.

A GENTLEMAN, as he was walking through a wood, happened to meet a person who hobbled along as well as he could upon two wooden legs. The gentleman, commiserating the fellow's condition, stopped to speak to him, and asked him what had reduced him to such an unhappy plight.

"Sir," replied the cripple, a little indignantly, "I beg you will undeceive yourself; you are under a total misapprehension. I expect you to congratulate me, on the contrary."

The gentleman was considerably surprised at this novel way of viewing such a matter, and begged the other to explain himself.

"You see, sir," replied the wooden-legged man, "since you invite me to be frank with you, the fact is, that when I was whole as you are, I was constantly requiring shoes and stockings, which were very expensive. Now I have no occasion for them. See what a saving! But is that all? By no means; for when I had my limbs, I never knew what it was to be free from annoyance and

anxiety. I was constantly afraid of bruising my feet against stones, or running a thorn into my heel, or getting chilblains, or corns, or something or other. At present, Lord bless you, sir ! it 's all one to me whether it rains or snows or freezes. My wooden legs are indeed invaluable to me : if I meet a dog, I can kick him with them ; if I see a snake, I can crush him with them ; if my wife does not behave herself, I can thrash her with them ; if I have nuts to crack, they crack them for me ; and at the end of seven or eight years, if they wear out, I can chop them up for firewood, and buy a new pair."

The gentleman smiled, and passed on. It had never struck him before that the possession of natural legs was attended by so many disadvantages, and that those people were in fact the happiest who were not afflicted by such unprofitable appendages. There is nothing, after all, so useful and improving as a new light thrown unexpectedly on an old and familiar question.

THE PURGATORY OF ST PATRICK.

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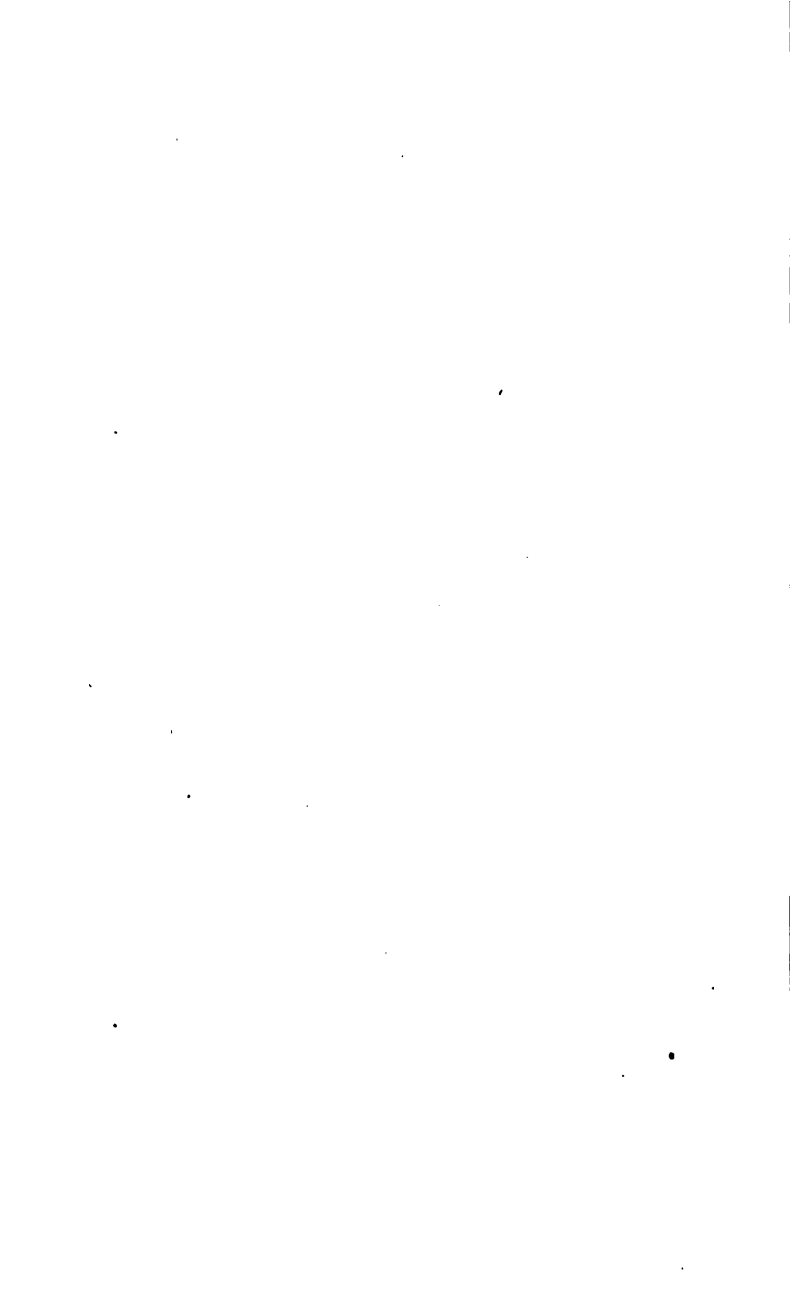
all parts of the world commenced, as soon as the fame of the cavern and its marvels spread abroad, and among the rest, a certain knight, named Sir Owain, determined to pay a visit to the scene of holy enchantment.

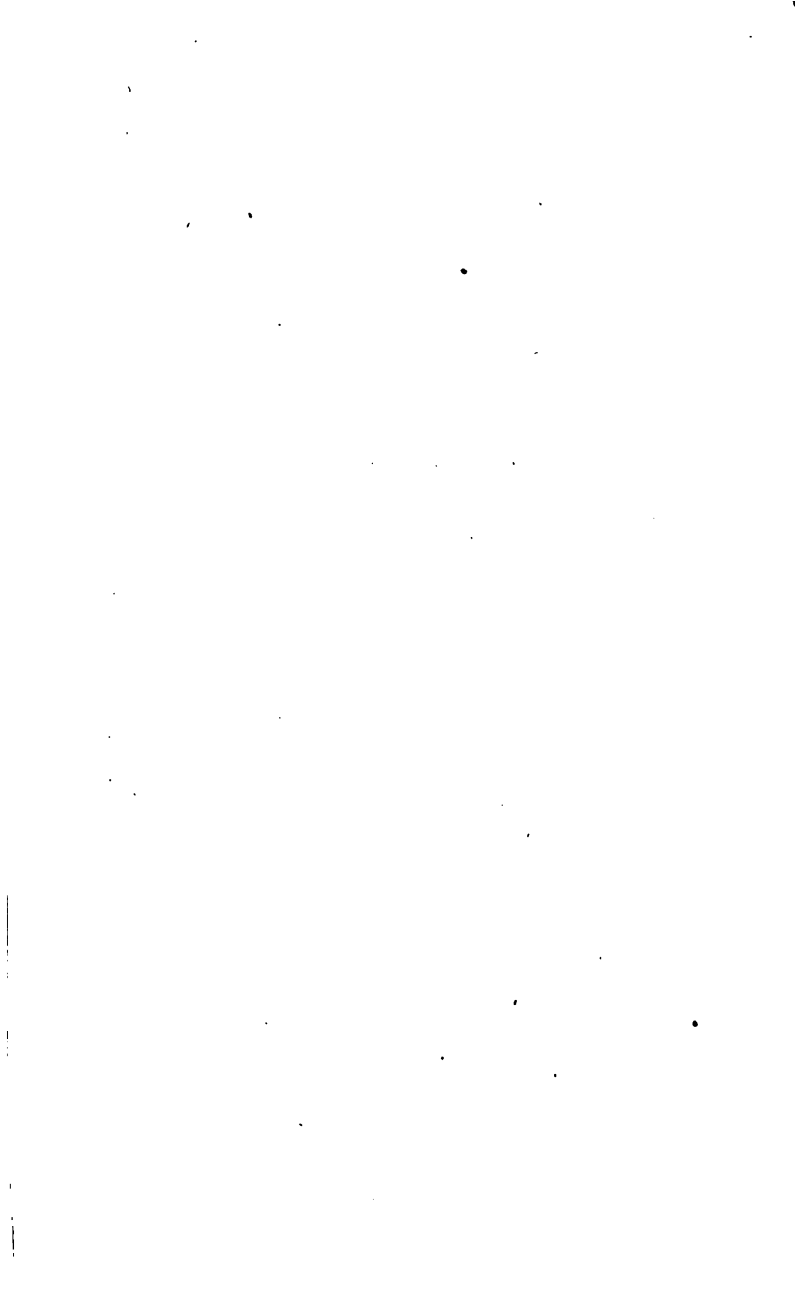
When Sir Owain entered the cavern, he remained at first in utter darkness; but presently a light glimmered, by the help of which he succeeded in reaching a palace. He found here a great number of knights clothed entirely in white, who endeavoured to dissuade him from continuing his journey, representing the terrible dangers which were in store for him further on. When they saw that he was resolute, however, they exhorted him to be of good cheer, and gave him the best advice in their power. Sir Owain left them; and before he had proceeded very far he encountered some demons, who threatened to visit him with all conceivable torments unless he turned back. Upon his refusal, they seized him, bound him to a wheel armed with spikes, cast him into a furnace, and then into a tank of icy-cold water. The knight pronounced in his agony the name of the Saviour, and his tormentors vanished. Recovering from his wounds and cruel usage, he went on, and arrived in a delicious garden, of which the gate was made of crystal, and the walls were nothing but precious stones. Flowers and fruit were in the most luxuriant abundance; the atmosphere was balm itself. Every day angels held there their choir; and at

noon a star exuded manna upon the ground, to serve as food to the dwellers in this blessed spot. Sir Owain was transported with delight at the spectacle which now presented itself to his sight, and declared his wish to pass there the remainder of his days. But he was told that he could not do so, for it was paradise which he beheld, and only after his death, if he had led a good and religious life, was it possible for him to return thither.

Tradition reports that the lesson was not lost upon Sir Owain, who turned monk, and spent the rest of his time in making himself ready to enjoy a share of the garden of which he was vouchsafed so miraculous a vision, while he yet lived.

THE END.







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